

BC

BV 4253 .C35 1892

Cairns, John.

Christ, the morning star : and other
sermons

2/6 1

James Mather

24th November

1892

CHRIST, THE MORNING STAR

And other Sermons



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

CHRIST, THE MORNING STAR

And other Sermons

BY THE LATE

JOHN CAIRNS, D.D., LL.D.

PRINCIPAL OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

EDITED BY HIS BROTHERS

London

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27 PATERNOSTER ROW

MDCCCXCII

4253

.C35

1892

PREFATORY NOTE

THE Sermons in this volume are necessarily sent forth without that final revision which only one hand could have given them. During the last two or three months of his life Dr. Cairns had made considerable progress in preparing materials for a volume of Sermons. He had rewritten twelve Discourses, and had selected as many more, obviously to be treated in a similar manner, when sudden death interrupted him in the midst of his labours, the pen almost literally falling from his hand, as on the day preceding his death he had been engaged in writing the Sermon on "Christ, the Sun of Righteousness," and left it unfinished.

The Editors have thus been happily relieved from the responsibility of selection, Dr. Cairns having himself sufficiently indicated his purpose. It will be seen that not a few of the Sermons were originally prepared in connection with Communion Seasons. Some of them were afterwards

repeatedly preached on public occasions, and in this way have already been partially in print.

The Editors have gratefully to acknowledge the assistance received in passing this volume through the press, from their own and their brother's valued friend, Mr. JOHN TAYLOR BROWN, Edinburgh, and from their relative, the Rev. JOHN CAIRNS, M.A., Dumfries.

If in any measure God be glorified, and the honour of the Saviour promoted by these utterances of a voice no longer heard in the Church below, the highest ends of the preacher will continue to be served, and the labour of fraternal affection be more than rewarded.

WILLIAM CAIRNS.

DAVID CAIRNS.

EDINBURGH, *September* 1892.

CONTENTS¹

I

CHRIST, THE MORNING STAR

Revelation xxii. 16; ii. 28

	PAGE
"I am . . . the bright and-morning star." "And I will give him the morning star"	I

II

CHRIST, THE ALPHA AND OMEGA

Revelation xxii. 13

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"	18
--	----

III

CHRIST—HIS ENDURING NAME

Psalm lxxii. 17

"His name shall endure for ever"	39
--	----

IV

CHRIST'S GLORY, THE SHAME OF HIS ENEMIES

Psalm cxxxii. 18

"His enemies will I clothe with shame : but upon Himself shall His crown flourish"	59
---	----

¹ [The titles have been supplied.—EDS.]

V

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

John xx. 21-23

PAGE

- 'Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" 79

VI

CHRIST, THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Malachi iv. 2

- "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings" 98

VII

PAUL'S WITNESS FOR CHRIST BEFORE AGRIPPA

Acts xxvi. 29

- "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" 118

VIII

THE MYSTERY AND THE GLORY OF REDEMPTION

Isaiah lv. 8, 9

- "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" 140

IX

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST

Revelation xiv. 13

	PAGE
“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them”	160

X

THE HAPPINESS OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Deuteronomy xxxiii. 29

“Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places”	177
---	-----

XI

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY : A TYPE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Luke xxiv. 32

“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?”	196
---	-----

XII

CLAIMS OF FOREIGN MISSIONS ON BRITAIN

Isaiah xliii. 21

“This people have I formed for myself ; they shall show forth my praise”	216
--	-----

XIII

CHRIST'S RETROSPECT OF HIS WORK ON EARTH

John xvii. 4

“I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do”	230
--	-----

XIV

OPINIONS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Matthew xvi. 13

	PAGE
"Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" . . .	244

XV

THE PENITENT MALEFACTOR

Luke xxiii. 39-43

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise"	256
---	-----

XVI

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Romans iv. 5

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" . . .	275
---	-----

XVII

THE UNWRITTEN AND THE WRITTEN LIFE OF CHRIST

John xx. 30, 31

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name"	291
---	-----

XVIII

THE DELIGHTSOME LAND

Malachi iii. 12

	PAGE
“And all nations shall call you blessed : for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of Hosts” . . .	305

XIX

THE EARTHLY SABBATH : A TYPE OF THE HEAVENLY

Hebrews iv. 9

“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” .	325
---	-----

XX

THE REFLEX INFLUENCE OF MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

Isaiah lviii. 10, 11

“And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul ; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day : and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones : and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” . . .	340
---	-----

XXI

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD

I Timothy i. 11

“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust”	352
--	-----

I

CHRIST, THE MORNING STAR

"I am . . . the bright and morning star."—REV. xxii. 16.

"And I will give him the morning star."—REV. ii. 28.

THE Book of the Revelation has a peculiar charm which all readers of Scripture more or less feel. It attracts the child by its shifting scenes, its bright pictures, its grand mysterious glimpses of the future. It satisfies the man of more mature understanding and taste, with the lofty truth and harmony that reign all through its mighty world of symbols and visions, a world which exhausts the stores of the Old Testament and then imagines new. It supplies to the scholar a vast hieroglyph to be interpreted, for which all his learning is hardly sufficient; while it kindles the student of prophecy as with a torch from heaven, till in its mystic blaze Antichrist is seen to fall and the kingdoms of this world bow to our Lord and his Christ. To the humble Christian, who does not aspire to penetrate its secrets as an unfulfilled history of time, it is delightful for the door that it opens into eternity, for the splendid crowns which it sets on the head and casts at the feet of Him who

alone is worthy, and for the near and glorious views which it gives of that heaven of which He is the centre. In more senses than one this book is the "revelation of Jesus Christ." No part of the Bible so fully unfolds the glories of His reign, adorns Him with such a profusion of titles, or pours out such a tide of love and adoration upon His person. One great peculiarity to which, among others, this result may be owing, is the frequency with which the Saviour re-appears and speaks. There are last words of His here added to those which He uttered on earth ; and every one can judge what a test this was of true revelation, as distinguishable from false. If "never man spake like this man" on earth, how difficult to support the strain when He speaks from heaven. But to this test this divine book is equal. The style is transfigured like the person, adding to the depth and tenderness of the gospel the lofty sweep and rich colouring of the prophets. This apocalyptic style grows upon us as we proceed ; but already it is felt in the opening epistles to the seven churches, in none more than in this to Thyatira ; and the whole book is, as it were, linked together by this one grand figure of the first of our texts taken from the close, "I am the bright and morning star," as it returns upon its beginning, "And I will give him the morning star."

In seeking to interpret these words as they stand in the second chapter, some have supposed that the "morning star" is not directly connected with Christ ; but that the promise is only a general one, setting forth the splendour of the reward of believers, as where it is said, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father." Upon this principle there would be the same blessing promised to the Church of Thyatira under two forms: rule over the nations, and the splendour of such an inheritance here and hereafter. I cannot, however, regard this view as correct; because it weakens the energy of the figure before us, and because it makes no reference to the title of Christ in the twenty-second chapter. Had our Lord meant to display the splendour and beauty of the Christian's reward, He would have spoken of making His people like the morning star, rather than of giving them the morning star; hence I agree with those who combine the two texts, and who understand Christ to promise that He will give Himself to His faithful ones as their portion and reward. But it is plain that Christ will not for the first time become the morning star to His people when He bestows Himself as their final reward, since He is so already in the present life; and hence we must understand Him as promising to give Himself in a higher measure as the reward of their fidelity. Our inquiry, therefore, will lead us, in the opening up of this great promise, following the light of the figure in it, to consider in what sense Christ is to His people the morning star of time, and then in what higher sense He will be to them the morning star of eternity. To this contemplation, then, in dependence on divine grace, let us now proceed.

§ 1. I remark then, *first*, that Christ is to His people the morning star of time, and will be to them the morning star of eternity, because *His light shines after darkness*. It belongs to the day star to appear in the midst of gloom when the shades of night are still thick and heavy, and to announce their

departure. It was in this sense that Christ came as the light of the world. There was a general sense in which the whole world sat in darkness, as it does still where Christ is not known. "Darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people." In every sense in which darkness can be applied, the human race sat under its shadow; and did so by its own confession. Take the altar at Athens, to which Paul appealed. If we understand its inscription as to "*The Unknown God*," did not this proclaim God at large as still unknown? If we understand it, as in our revised version, to "*An Unknown God*," did it not come to the same result, since, for all that paganism knew, this unknown god might be the most formidable of all, and the most difficult to appease and reckon with? Have the researches of comparative religion opened up a better issue in the existing pagan world, or come upon any track of unexpected light? When Christ came, the world was in the darkness of guilt, with only light enough to read the sentence of conscience, but none to see how it could be reversed. There was the darkness of depravity, for in the night the "beasts of the forest walked abroad;" and foul and hideous lusts degraded every land. These causes produced a darkness of untold misery, till men fled from life itself, and in the unseen, dreaded the presence of furies and tormentors which had made it their home. Such was the state of the world when Christ came into it, a morning star upon the brow of night; and did He not fulfil the emblem? He scattered the darkness of ignorance by revealing God, salvation, and immortality. He removed the darkness of guilt by atoning for it, and thus blotting out the handwriting of con-

demnation that was against every sinner. He met the darkness of depravity by sending down the effectual beams of truth, purity, and spiritual life, into hearts the most degraded ; and He dispelled the darkness of misery by lifting upon the world the light of God's countenance, by solving the mystery of the grave, and by assuring the children of sorrow that troubles, pains, and deaths work together for good to them that love God. Thus was Christ the Light of the world when He came ; thus is He the Light of the world still ; and to His appearing, as to that of the day star amidst the long-enduring gloom, the words of the prophecy may be applied : " The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light : they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Similar to this first coming of Christ into the world is His first appearing in His saving character to individual sinners. Every sinner to whom Christ has not thus appeared walks in darkness. He is like the sleep-walker who pursues his perilous way at midnight by the edge of the precipice or upon the bulwarks of the vessel at sea, but without the same excuse for his unconcern, since it is not a physical but a moral distemper, and broken by many an alarm that should bring near the danger. Let him at length be aroused by the Spirit of God, and how awful is the sense of darkness that overwhelms him ! The darkness comes, but without a visible way of escape. With the darkness is blackness and tempest, as if some bolt from the frowning sky might suddenly burst and end the career of sin in swift destruction. But, behold, in this hour of consternation and all but despair, the heavens are opened, not in wrath but in

mercy ; and it is almost as if a star of hope literally shone forth to reveal the way of peace. How often has the hymn of Kirke White been repeated—

“ Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was loud, the night was dark,
The ocean yawned, and rudely blowed
The wind that tossed my foundering bark,
Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem ;
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.”

The experience of Christians, indeed, is various. Some have more memory of this darkness than others. Some wander in it longer, and plunge into it more deeply. Some can recall the sorrows of a long starless night of unequalled and indescribable misery ; while the remembrances of others as to the beginnings in themselves of Christian hope are less gloomy. But all alike have come out of darkness, and come out of it at the signal of Christ's rising. All trace the grand transition to His appearing in their day, and with a full and swelling heart take up the same words of thanksgiving : “ Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Such is the first grand deliverance from darkness, which Christ works for all His people, and which during their earthly history He constantly renews when the clouds of ignorance, the shades of guilt, and the storms of afflictions might gather around them. And now in the second of our texts He promises, as the reward of their faith and loyalty, that He will give Himself to each of them as the morning star of eternity. Here too the emblem

shall be fulfilled, for His light will shine after darkness. To every Christian, the brightest, the happiest, the most devoted, there is a sense in which life ends in darkness. The passage from time into eternity is a dark passage. The Christian must enter it alone, and pursue it, it may be, with failing eye and fainting step. There is no night so deep as that of the valley of the shadow of death. But here the last victory over darkness is achieved. The glory of Christ's presence, as it shines high in the region of eternity, penetrates from the farther side, and the soul, attracted and quickened as by the freshness of the morning air, breaks through and emerges in its full light. "Light is thus sown for the righteous" when the departing spirit is gathered home. But again over the ashes of the grave the resurrection morning breaks with this star of promise; and they that dwell in the dust "awake and sing, and earth shall cast out the dead!" And when the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the mighty shadow of the judgment throne falls even upon the redeemed in awe and solemn dread, shall not this bright and morning star rest upon the head of Him who is at once their Judge and Advocate, so that they shall "rise to meet him, free of fear"? Now has come a world of which it is written, "And there shall be no night there," "The Lord God giveth them light, and the Lamb is the light thereof." The darkness is of the past, no luminary as here casting a shadow, joy no longer wedded to grief, hope to fear, or life to death, no trace of decay or element from which a second night could be born. This star makes all inviolable, and for ever divides the light from the darkness! Marvellous light, after such darkness—

the light as total as was once the darkness, and Christ the pathway from the one to the other! We can believe, but hardly realise it. Shall it not fill the ransomed with a new song, making the praises of earth like praises in a dungeon or "songs in the night"?

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that Christ is to His people the morning star of time, and will be to them the morning star of eternity, because His light *transcends all comparison*. No one can mistake the morning star in the firmament, or confound it with any other orb. It shines pre-eminent and alone. In the words of Milton, it "flames in the forehead of the morning sky." Thus is it with Christ. He is the "bright" as well as the morning star. He is without a rival in time, and He will be, even more gloriously, without a rival in eternity. "In all things He has the pre-eminence."

Christ is pre-eminent *in His titles*. Some of these are shared with others; but what a stamp of peculiarity is set upon them as applied to Christ! Is He the Son of God? Then He is His "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father." Is He the Angel of God? Then He is "made so much better than the angels, as He hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than they." Is He the Mediator? Then He is "the one Mediator between God and men." Is He the Saviour? Then there is salvation in no other, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Christ is pre-eminent *in His offices*. These have by all but universal consent been reduced to three, as defining, and together exhausting His work for our salvation. But in each of them He transcends

all comparison with type or parallel. As a Prophet, He brings revelation from the highest heaven : " As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." As a Priest, He offers the alone and perfect sacrifice ; for " now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." As a King, He is without example ; for His kingdom is at once inherited and acquired, and to whom, as to none other, homage is paid : " Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

Christ is pre-eminent *in His history*. To Him all history converges, and in His own it is summed up and transcended ; for His birth is the song of angels, His life the light of men, His death the destruction of death and of him that had the power of it, His resurrection the first fruits of them that sleep, His ascension the ascending up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. Thus He that cometh from heaven is above all things, and the very figures that are employed in Scripture to show His greatness forth reduce all others to shadows. He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah ; He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley ; He is the Pearl of Great Price ; He is the Plant of Renown ; He is the Bread of Life ; He is the precious Corner-stone ; He is the Door of the Sheep—emblems from every region ; and when light is chosen, it is light in its most transcendent forms ; for He is the Light of the World ; He is the Sun of Righteousness ; He is the Star out of Jacob ; He is the Bright and Morning Star.

What Christ is to His people, He is *alone*. We have many friends, but only one Redeemer ; many earthly helpers, but only One who delivers our souls from the lowest hell. It is the entrance of His word

alone that gives light ; it is His blood alone that cleanses us from sin ; it is His Spirit alone that renews in us the image of God ; it is He alone that is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. The succour that we receive from others in the things of salvation, so far from disturbing Christ's pre-eminence, only confirms it. They are but stars held in His hand, and shining with borrowed lustre, so that if any stop with such derived light, they are the first to correct the error, and to point to the original, renewing the protestation of the apostle, "We have nothing but what we have received ; Christ is all and in all." Can there be a more striking argument of Christ's transcendence in the work of redemption than this, that the Spirit of the eternal God is sent forth and commissioned to exalt Him, "He shall glorify Me," says our Lord, "for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." How can this argument ever be met by those who deny the Saviour's transcendent greatness? Only in one way, alas, by denying the greatness, the divine greatness, of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Son is revealed and exalted ; but so long as Christ's own word stands, so long will this argument stand with it ; and the Spirit witness with the Word, that Jesus is Lord and Christ. What then is the great lesson that we should draw alike from the Old Testament history and the New—from the types, written or living, of the one, and the fulfilments of the other—from the commingling voices of patriarchs, prophets, and psalmists, given back by apostles, martyrs, confessors, missionaries, evangelists, down to the last who has entered heaven to take up the strain, "Thou alone art worthy," but to

strive to have formed within ourselves by the same Holy Ghost this same spirit of love and all-absorbing adoration, assured that here we are on the central ground of all Christianity ; in the succession of all its immortal hopes and promises ; and that Christ, who has become to us in so great a sense the First, will also in a yet greater be the Last ?

The unity which the soul of man receives through Christ is as great a proof of adaptation and design as anything in the outer world. The heart of man needs something to engross it, an object on which it can concentrate all its affections without self-reproach, and which by its admitted sway brings unity into its existence, and concord into all its purposes and aspirations. Now as Christ has fulfilled this end in time, so shall He yet more by His gloriously asserted and devoutly recognised pre-eminence fulfil it to endless ages. His supremacy shall then be disclosed as on earth, in its brightest manifestation, it never yet has been. The morning star shall then shine forth unsullied by a cloud. Christ shall take the highest place in the hierarchy of heaven, as His by eternal right and His by divine bestowment. All the angels of God shall worship Him. He shall be the Lamb in the midst of the throne. He shall preside over the opening of the books—that is, over the development of the counsels of God. He shall lead His people to living fountains of waters, and be the centre of all their activities, and joys, and songs ; and also the bond of their blissful association with the angelic race, and of their endearing fellowship with the Father. What new displays of grace and glory Christ in these new circumstances shall make, it is not given to us to

know. But surely it would be contrary to all our views of the magnitude of the divine resources and to all our past experience of the character of the Saviour, if, seated in the highest place, and with a wondering universe for spectators, displays and manifestations of surpassing grandeur should not be made all in the line of His glorious work on earth, and all fitted to diffuse, deepen, and prolong its effects and lessons through the depths of eternity.

And while the morning star shall thus emit new and dazzling rays, O how different the impression of delight and rapture which His pre-eminence shall make then on His own people from what it made here! Then there shall be no darkness of ignorance or unbelief to hide His beams—no sin, or world, or self, to divide the heart with Him—no creature worship to impair His ascendancy—no coldness and lukewarmness even in the Church to damp the rising flame of love and adoration! Love and adoration shall be spontaneous and irresistible, swollen by myriad sympathies, by ten thousand times ten thousand tongues, and these blest emotions shall ever swell and rise, as the past blends its lights with the present, and new words and deeds of Jesus surround with fresh glories His cross and His throne! Say, brethren, if any prospect that the mind of man can conceive can equal the blessedness of this eternal subjugation to one paramount influence, which is felt to be infinite in its claims and infinite in its resources? or could the Saviour have held out a reward that better meets the deepest necessities and the strongest aspirations of the human heart than when He uttered the promise to the faithful servant, “I will give him the morning star”?

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that Christ is the morning star of time, and will be the morning star of eternity, because His light *ushers in perpetual day*. It is the property of the morning star to be the day's harbinger. Other stars rise and shine and set, and leave the darkness still behind them. They belong to the night; and night wraps her mantle around her own children that cannot pass beyond the sombre shadow. But the morning star is not a child of night but of the day, rushing, as it were, to the embrace of his sire, and expiring in it for joy. Hence Christ is not compared to the evening star, though it be in itself as bright as that of the morning, and indeed the same; because in that case the associations would be too gloomy, and the victory would seem to remain for a time on the side of darkness. With Christ as the morning star the victory is decided from the first, and night can never resume her ancient empire. True, the Christian may be in darkness even after Christ has risen upon him, but it is only "the cloudy and dark *day*"—it is no more "*the black and dark night*." The dawn may be overcast, but the day still proceeds. Gathering clouds may spread and deepen, but the fount of life is still somewhere in the sky, and speaks his presence. In the blackest, wintriest, stormiest hour of the Christian's pilgrimage, his steps can never be in such darkness as before "the day dawned, and the day star arose in his heart"; for Christ is still above him, around him, and within him, the hope of glory; and even when the light of hope seems to fail, there is the light of memory; and *that* is daylight compared with the dense midnight gloom in which he once wandered! Yes, Christian brethren,

you are the children of the day, though like the poet Cowper you should have no Christian experience but only a vivid recollection of the past ; though you should write bitter things against yourselves, and shut yourselves out from the sweet influences of heaven. Day still penetrates through the crevices of your unbelief into the dungeon of your despondency ; and you are startled in your self-made gloom and solitude by rays that travel from beyond the icy atmosphere from a higher luminary, though you refuse to go forth to them. Never can those who have walked in the light of the Lord suffer a total eclipse. They have known Christ as the Lord of life, as the Bringer of joy ; and at any moment the dismal shade may vanish, and the full reappearing orb wake up the soul and all that is within it to more than the notes of its former jubilee !

Such is the mighty “day-spring from on high” which every Christian has seen burst upon him, and which no returning shadow on the dial can ever reverse. And so shall it be, but in a nobler sense, with that cloudless, unbounded day which Christ, as the morning star of immortality, shall introduce. Then there shall be no struggle with twilight, no march of the herald star through lingering clouds, no waiting for the coming orb ; but the light-bringing messenger itself, first orient on the new horizon, shall leap at once into a full meridian sun—a sun that shall go no more down ! Who shall describe the scenes of glory and of joy on which that unsetting luminary shall rest ? All that is lovely in nature—all that is exquisite in art—all that is splendid in military triumphs and tender in marriage festivals—all that is endearing in friendship—all that is

ennobling in citizenship—all that is sublime and soul-stirring in worship,—is wrought in this seraphic book into one great picture of the heavenly blessedness ; and then upon that vast unparalleled array the full light streams forth of perennial sunshine ; and in all there is nothing that fears the light, or suffers from it—nothing that withers—nothing that tarnishes—but all give back the full ray and open out new beauties in its entrancing lustre.

Such is “the glorious inheritance of the saints in light ;” and I know only two exceptions that have been taken to it. *One is that the picture is inconsistent ;* for the saints are described in incompatible attitudes and exercises—now standing before the throne, and now led forth to living fountains of waters—now striking the harp and now waving the palm—now marching out in long procession, and now reclining at the marriage feast. But how ineffectual is this objection, proving rather the variety and fulness of the boundless object. Heaven cannot be exhausted by earthly images, and hence they must needs fail. Heaven has on it the stamp of the infinite, and it is the nature of the infinite when handled by human faculties to seem to break up into inconsistency and contradiction.

Even less solid is the other objection, that in the heaven of the Apocalypse, *with all its splendour and promise, there is an element of monotony.* This is to apply a taste corrupted and vitiated by strife and sin to the realities of an unfallen and sinless world. Strife is here the apparent rest from the monotony and weariness of sin. Sin leads its ever-baffled followers through an empty round of endless agitations, hiding its nakedness in perpetual disguises,

and making the soul to shun most its inmost self and God. How can such a nature, without renewal or inward peace, tormented by ambition, envy, and restless desire, find anything but monotony in the heaven of the Bible? Hence this charge is nothing but a self-accusation; for to all that is grand and captivating in this prospect such ears are unattuned. Let not then a world without rest, without fulness, without harmony, bring its short measuring line to gauge the deep calm blessedness of heaven. For can there be monotony in a society where Christ presides and opens up all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge to faculties strong and ardent as the eagle that salutes the sun? Can there be monotony in a region where the unfallen and the redeemed gather to one endless home, where friendship puts on all its attractions, and where love pours forth its exhaustless tides to swell the common store? Were there nothing but the love in the Christian heart toward Christ, *that* is an emanation of the eternal, and therefore it can support the weight of eternity; therefore it can rise to meet the ever-rising day; therefore it can glow with prophetic and anticipative ecstasy even here, in the rehearsal of the strains of which Christ is the all, and eternity the burden, and break with longing for the advent of the hour when it shall join in the triumphant and exultant shout, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb *for ever and ever!*"

In conclusion, let me remark how all the blessedness of this indispensable, incomparable, everlasting gift is enhanced by the fact that Christ is at once

the gift and the giver. "I will give him the morning star." A gift like this, self-constituted and self-bestowed, is the highest with which one creature can bless another, the last pledge of affection, the crowning proof of confidence, the ratification of a covenant which only death can dissolve. But how faint an image such a gift of what Christ bestows in bestowing Himself! how faint an image, though all that is sacred in affection should meet with all that is exalted in dignity, though kings should stand up to witness it, and assembled nations hail it with their blessing! Here all is upon a loftier and grander scale, stretching into the realm of infinitude, and surrounding itself with its unfathomable interest; the gift the most transcendent thing in the universe, and the heart that yields it the seat of eternal and unchangeable love! O happy Christian, whom this rewards at the close of life's humble faithful labour, when the day breaks and the shadows flee, and when the morning star leads in the marriage-supper of the Lamb! Blessed, thrice blessed, are those who shall have a share in this great solemnity—whom the King Eternal and Immortal shall claim as His own, and whom He shall make heirs of all things in crowning them with His diadem and raising them to His throne! Men and brethren, this is the prize of our high calling! Ought it not to lift us all above the works of darkness, above the fashions of the world, above the vanities of time, and to concentrate all our energies in one prolonged, persevering, and, through grace, victorious effort to win Christ and be found in Him? "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

II

CHRIST, THE ALPHA AND OMEGA

‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.’—REV. xxii. 13.

HE who is the eternal Reason, the Word of God, is here pleased to ally Himself with the whole of Greek literature, by appropriating to Himself the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He thus puts a stamp upon all the treasures of Greek wisdom and knowledge, conveyed in these letters and all that lay between, and claims them for His kingdom. All that lay of wisdom and knowledge bearing on the world's history in Homer and Aeschylus, in Plato and Aristotle, in Thucydides and Demosthenes, He here includes ; with the higher wisdom of the Old Testament that had been for centuries in Grecian speech preparing His way, and fulfilling again the word, “Out of Egypt have I called my son ;” with the yet more wonderful utterances of apostles and evangelists, which could only in the same vehicle have been given to men ; followed as these were to be, though with unequal steps, by the great generations of confessors and martyrs, who in the earliest struggles of His gospel were in the same world-wide tongue to impress it on all nations. Christ, I say,

here puts the greatest honour on this language ever done to it in word, as He has thus honoured it in history ; and we may say has indirectly honoured all human writing and literature, in making the alphabet of all nations suggestive of His own immortal name.

That it is Christ who here speaks, no one can doubt. The words that immediately precede separate the speaker from every created angel : " Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Nay, in the very first chapter of this sublime book, as here in the last, as if to bind its extremities together, and to afford an example of the union of the beginning and end, we have these great words : " Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him." " I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning, and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

I cannot but remark, before proceeding to any further illustration of this subject, that whatever else is taught by these words, they involve a claim to Deity. This is given in the Old Testament as a title of Jehovah, distinguishing him from the idols of paganism. Thus in Isaiah xlv. 6 : " Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts ; I am the first, and I am the last ; and beside me there is no God." Could, then, a divine title like this have been appropriated by any creature ? This is a difficulty which stands in the way of those who give to Christ the highest degree of human excellence, and yet suppose him capable of encroaching on the honour due to God. The retort would in that case have been just, " Thou bearest witness of thyself ; thy witness is not true." But

Jesus in the gospels meets it with the defence, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go." Let me add that the mythical and tendency schools in Germany are here placed in special difficulty, for they hold that this Apocalypse reflects the very earliest views of the Christian Church regarding Christ, while the notion of his divinity took a long time to develop; though it is hard to see what titles of Christ could be higher than those so constantly given him in this book, which they grant to have been among the earliest in Christianity.

The lofty title of Christ set forth by Him, through so grand a reference to the speech of men, and then twice repeated in unfigured language, leads us to explain His meaning along two lines of illustration: *first*, in so far as He is the Alpha and Omega in relation to Creation and Providence; and then, *secondly*, in so far as He is the Alpha and Omega in relation to Redemption. To these considerations, then, in reliance on Divine succour, let us now proceed.

I. Christ is, *first*, the Alpha and Omega *in relation to Creation and Providence*. Christianity is at this day the great upholder of Theism in the world. It has unspeakably distanced Judaism, whose testimony against idolatry it has taken up, and also Mohammedanism, whose witness for the unity of God is nowhere going forth with visible conquering power. This is an evidence that Christianity is true to Theism, unless we hold that the one God who rules the world suffers its history to go against Him. But Christianity is more than the witness of simple Theism. There is a trinity in its unity, and this

gives it a richness, a grandeur, an adaptability to the fallen state of man of which mere Theism is incapable. Hence the Son shines in the Christian firmament as the true God, along with the Father and the Holy Ghost ; and thus the divine works of Creation and Providence are connected with His name. We do not base this on any deductions of reason, though we undertake to show that reason has never repelled it, but on the testimonies of Holy Scripture. Thus in the opening of the Gospel of John, it is said of the Word who became flesh, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." So the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in its first chapter applies to Him the grand apostrophe of the 102nd Psalm : "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of thy hands." And quite as explicitly the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians : "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by Him, and for Him." Christ is thus the Alpha of Creation, which finds in Him the absolute origin of its existence. There is a grandeur in the Scripture doctrine of Creation to which even science and philosophy, however reason also teach it, find it hard to rise. "God said, Let there be light : and there was light." "He spake, and it was done ; He commanded, and it stood fast." Much of the professed Theism of our day runs into Pantheism by lifting up the Creation to something like the divine level, or losing itself in some ascending series without a true summit. But Scripture gives

to God the glory of this truly divine work, without either lifting the creature too far in the scale, or separating the divinity unduly from it. And thus, while it guards true Theism by the doctrine of Creation, it further guards it by making God create all things by Jesus Christ. The element of personality that exalts the living God is made more emphatic; and yet the creation can less be severed from the eternal throne. Hence we do well, even in the interests of Theism, to connect, as Scripture does, the living Word with it; and thus also we shall follow in the track of the early Church, which delighted to find at this point at once its deliverance from nature-worship or creature-worship, and a new homage to its Saviour. But while we ever thus claim, and even reclaim Creation for Christ, not less Providence also; for the one involves the other. The system of things, though by law and order it makes a system, cannot be left without the special control of its Author; and thus we are told of the Saviour, that He "upholdeth all things by the word of his power" and that "in Him all things consist." The very grandeur and singularity of these claims made in Scripture on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ is an argument for their truth; and not least what is said, "that all things were created *for* Him." He who is the Creator and Upholder must also be the Last End of all things, the Omega as well as the Alpha, though nothing greater is said of our Lord in the whole Bible; and thus the whole from first to last hangs together. There is thus a pledge for the ultimate visible harmony of Science with Scripture, though there may be apparent conflicts; and over the wide universe everything shall at last be found

to be under Christ's feet,—not necessarily in the way of loyal subjection, but in the way of bearing witness to one ascendant will, which orders all things, even evil, for the best,—so that the great vision in the fifth chapter of this book of Revelation shall be made good : “ And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

II. I am thus led, *secondly*, to speak of Christ as the Alpha and Omega *in relation to Redemption*. We feel at first as if there were a contraction of horizon when we turn from the vast realm of Creation and Providence to that of Redemption. But this impression is soon corrected. Rather Creation and Providence are liker the stage on which the great events of sacred history, which is the centre of all histories, are to be transacted ; and there is in the Scripture record a doxology already prepared for Creation and Providence to strike in and take up the song in which all is ended. But it is true that when the eye turns from the more vague and boundless field of Creation and Providence to that of Redemption, there is a sense of distinctness and exactitude ; for Scripture was written to reveal this as nothing else, and it does not fail in its mission. Here then the name of Christ again meets us ; not now in dim, however majestic outline, but in ever-growing light. Perhaps it may be possible to condense the Scripture revelations of redemption into *four* points, viewing it *first* as a divine saving plan ; *secondly*, as a personal Christian experience ; *thirdly*, as a collective spiritual history ; and *fourthly*, as an endless development. In

regard to each of these, the word of Christ is true, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

§ 1. I remark then that Christ is the Alpha and Omega in regard to Redemption *as a divine saving plan*. We cannot ascend to the origin of this plan ; for it is from eternity. But as far as we can rise, Christ is seen to be its fountain-head, and with His purpose of devotement it is bound up. We cannot separate here, indeed, the consent of the Son from the appointment of the Father, and the mysterious co-operation of the Eternal Spirit. All are bound together like the extremities of the rainbow which arches into oneness around the heavenly throne. We can at least go back, though such knowledge is almost too high for us, to that covenant of Redemption in which the Son speaks: "Lo, I come! In the volume of the book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will, O my God ; thy law is within my heart." This is a starting-point, where Christ comes forth as the Alpha in His divine purpose ; and when the time arrived for the revealing of it, we have reason to believe that His was the voice by which it was first disclosed. "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." It was He then who gave the first hope of mercy, in the threatening to the serpent, "He shall bruise thy head ;" so that He who is the subject of that promise is the first to utter it, as the sunbeam itself first announces to the world the existence of light. From that great oracle every other sprang and germinated ; and each successive growth was ushered in by Christ. He was the author of the Patriarchal dispensation. Its scattered

promises, then few and far between, were presented like early stars by His hand. Its humble altars and simple sacrifices rose at His word, and He appeared in person to Enoch and to Noah, to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. The Mosaic dispensation was also full of Him. Moses and all the prophets spoke as they were moved by His Spirit dwelling in them. All the types and shadows that foretold His saving work had Himself for their author. No other than He appeared to Moses at the Bush and in Mount Horeb ; as afterwards in the most holy place He sat between the cherubim, adored in emblems of His own coming sacrifice. And as He was thus the Alpha of this Old Testament dispensation that stretched in successive forms through thousands of years, so was He bound to be its Omega. What would it all have signified without Him? Its prophecies would have remained fruitless divinations ; its types a heap of riddles ; its worship a dead body without a soul ; and all its ordinances a burdensome yoke, borne for centuries, and borne in vain. But it became Him to fulfil it ; and when the fulness of the time was come, He appeared as the Omega of the Old Testament economy ; and at the same time as the Alpha of the New. " This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ;" for He came by water and blood, to prove himself the *Christ*, the Messiah of the Old Testament, and not less by water and blood to prove himself *Jesus*, the Saviour of the World. Now then, when the ages have waited so long, the summons comes, " Let us look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." He is the Author of our faith by His amazing Incarnation, by which He takes hold, not on angels to help them, but

on the seed of Abraham, and is made in all things like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest." He is the Finisher of our faith by His stupendous sacrifice on the cross, in which "He finishes transgression, and makes an end of sin, and brings in everlasting righteousness." These are the first and last grand acts of our Lord's mediatorial work, in which it begins and ends, fulfilling the divine counsel and saving a lost world. Some have asked, Which of the two is the more vital? Which is the real axis of redemption? We answer, They cannot be separated, or properly conceived of apart. Each shines in the greatness of the other, and they are the enemies of both who tear them asunder. And all that lies between birth in the manger and death on the cross, how does it dwarf all comparison! The teaching of Christ is incomparable in matter, whether it bears on God, or salvation, or duty, or immortality; and not less wonderful in form, for it is the perfection of language, heavenly things in the very speech of heaven. The miracles of Jesus are also unexampled in their union of grandeur with ease, in their benignity, in their profusion, and in their teaching power as parables and sermons. And the life of Jesus is the greatest miracle of all—the perfection of goodness, in which everything is in its place and everything as wise and pure as it is tender and sympathetic, and uniting as never before or since zeal for God with sacrifice for man. No one could perform a part of Christ's work and leave to Him the rest. And as this was not possible, so it was not needed. The inner movement of Christ's life carries Him on. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

Of the twelve hours each brings its strange but harmonious task, and when the night comes, the work is done. Not otherwise are we to explain the mysterious prayer, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." This is no tragic start, no sudden paroxysm of self-ignorant weakness! It is the record of the greatest strength that ever bowed under sin's burden, showing how true was the agony, and by what a price we have been redeemed! Let us rejoice with joy unspeakable, that He who was the Alpha of our redemption became the Omega too. Now He is beyond, and we are beyond, that awful darkness. "It is finished!" Let us not lower His work and misunderstand it, while at the same time we unduly exalt our own by speaking as if Christ's sacrifice belonged to the same category with ours. Then had He died not to end sacrifice, but to begin it, and stand at the head of a long line of sufferers taking away sin out of the world by essentially the same endurance with His. But He is alone! "His blood shed," as ours never can be, "for remission of sins unto many." "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Redemption *as a personal Christian experience*. When is it, brethren, that any one of us becomes a Christian? Is it not when Christ Himself draws near, and talks with us, as with the disciples on the way? We have no experimental Christianity apart from Him. He is the Alpha of our personal religious history. It is not a dead and nominal Christ, such as may have belonged to other studies, even such as were called theological. It is

a living and transforming power. The beginning of this new life is, so to speak, the awakening of a sense of death without Him ; and at the same time a new-born attraction, which prevails over all repulsion and recoil, so that with trembling and agitation, and yet with full purpose of heart, we commit our eternal all into His hands. We may seem to ourselves to have begun this work ; but Christ has begun it before us. For this opening of hearts, what is it but the result of His unlocking of them?—this movement, what but the constraint of His drawing?—this unwonted tenderness, what but the shedding of His spirit, like dew upon the mown grass, or as showers that water the earth? “O, happy day that fixed my choice!”—such is the universal Christian retrospect of a time that stands out as all-decisive in time, and laden with blessing for all eternity. But with Christ all originates. If we are pardoned, it is because we have redemption through His blood—even the forgiveness of sins ; if we are restored to God’s family, it is because that to as many as receive Him He gives the privilege of becoming the Sons of God. If we are washed and sanctified as well as justified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. If we taste a new-born peace, it is because Christ is our peace—a new-born liberty, it is because His truth has made us free—a new-born hope, it is because “we are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” All comes to us with his name upon it—nay, hallowed and endeared by the very mark of His blood. We can trace no part of it back to ourselves, or to any other benefactor ; for we see and feel that, like bread of life, it comes from

heaven. This is the deepest spirit of all Christian experience. Our theologies may be somewhat different, but our doxologies are one. Our hymns are here our best creeds, and do they not one and all attest, from all ages and sections of the universal Church, anticipating the songs of immortality, that with Christ our whole salvation takes its rise, that without Him we are undone, that severed from Him we can do nothing, and that had He not first come from heaven to earth, and then from the cross to the door of our hearts, we had still been dead in *trés-passes* and sins—children of wrath even as others? This unity of earth foreshadows and prepares for the unity of the skies: “Thou art worthy: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Thus is it with the first grand experience of converting and saving grace; but not less does Christ blend and mingle with all the succeeding experiences of the Christian’s history. He “compasses his path and his lying down, and is acquainted with all his ways.” He gently smooths the steps of every pilgrim in the ways of holiness. He suffers not the smoking flax to be quenched, or the bruised reed to be broken. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how;” the emblem being fulfilled indeed in the growth of the seed, but over-passed in the sleepless wakefulness of the Husbandman. In temptation Christ is a defence to the Christian, in darkness a light; in his worst backslidings, turning upon him glances that make him go out and weep bitterly, and then recalling him

openly with the question, " Lovest thou me?" What is Christian experience but this secret history of the affections of the soul towards an ever-present Saviour? Take this away, and it becomes a dark orb, a science of optics to the blind, a world of harmony to the deaf, a tale buried in the hearts of the dumb. The first glad word of the sinner when he falls before the cross is "None but Christ," and this is the last of the most experienced saint. This goes with him through life, with all its changes and developments of character. He outgrows his childhood and youth, forgetting many things as things behind. He forsakes the books which once he loved, the studies from which he was inseparable; the earthly objects, it may be, no longer able in the light of conscience to retain his affection. His path is upward, and the tread of time urges into scenes that are ever new. But time itself cannot antiquate his attachment to his Saviour. Distance cannot make it fade, nay, brightens it as it draws him to the lonely isle or pathless desert to make that Saviour known! As it kindled in the soul of the stripling, it burns more ardently in the breast of the patriarch. It outlasts all other affections, survives all other memories, and is clung to as the last anchor of the soul when every earthly hope has perished! When a dying bishop of the Church of England, Bishop Beveridge, had closed his eyes in an apparently last sleep, a friend repeatedly asked him, "Do you know me?" but there was no reply. It occurred to him to put the question, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" Then the dying man looked up and said, "Blessed be God, I have known Him these many years. He is all my hope." Would, dear brethren, that Christ were to us the First; then

will He be the Last. We know the Alpha of our earthly friendships, but we do not know their Omega. We bless God for our good hope that they will stand and comfort us in the last extremity. But in regard to Christ we have more than probability; we have persuasion. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Redemption as *a collective spiritual history*. Christianity was never intended to be a solitary experience, or a multitude of single experiences. It was to be a society—a Church. It was to take up the work and inherit the conquests of another society, which was a nation, the Church of the Old Testament; while itself should embrace all nations, and turn them into a universal Church or Kingdom of God. This was its collective mission, to be carried out in all lands, and through all the centuries of human history. Was it not a great thing in Christ to be the Alpha of such a society; to build it upon a foundation already laid, and yet to make it far more spiritual, energetic, and wide-embracing; to enlarge its statute-book by adding a New Testament to the Old; to give it rites of worship more simple and more impressive, while essentially the same in import or meaning; and, above all, to remove its membership from the footing of mere natural birth to that of birth from heaven, while providing a new creating power, whereby the children of this New Jerusalem should be unspeak-

ably more numerous than those of the Old. Christ stands forth as the Alpha of this new creation, such as had never been seen in the world before—visible in doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, and yet invisible, because having its deepest seat in the hidden man of the heart, with more of its members in heaven than on earth, and more in the future than now alive. We may say with confidence that no one had the full and distinct idea of such a society as the Christian Church till Christ conceived it; and then how wonderful was it that He should Himself found it; that He should maintain it, enlarge it, and lead it on to ever-growing victory! It has often been said, in words derived from an early father, that “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” This is far more true of Him who is the King of Martyrs. He was the seed-corn, falling into the ground and dying, which brought forth all this fruit. As we read the Acts of the Apostles, the sequel to the Gospels is evident to all—the same Christ in a new sphere, His name working signs and wonders on the souls, and still also on the bodies, of men, living virtue going out of Him—the bread blessed and feeding thousands—the “great multitude obedient to the faith.” The earthly leaders visibly do not lead. They point to One above—and their dying charge renews the battle, “Remember Jesus Christ.” Thus the rock remains visible against which the gates of hell could not prevail, and in this sign the Church conquers. There are those who have held in the early ages a changeful and double-faced Christianity, now regarding Christ as man, and then as God. How untrue to human nature, for how could such a fluctuating scheme, in the face of all the terrors of

the world, have gained or held its converts? And how unworthy of Christ to suppose the greatest, the most pure, the most peaceful of conquerors, rising to empire through hallucination and error! It was truth that won, the same truth from the beginning, truth winged and edged by the power of Christ's spirit; and only as the name of Christ retreated, and the everlasting Gospel preached in it was sealed up, has the flight of the angel with it in the midst of heaven been delayed. But revival has come, as in no other religion, renewed as in the Reformation and in last century; and what have revivals been, but the unrolling anew of Christ's name, as dark ages have been those in which it was under eclipse? But every renovation, every expansion, has come from Christ Himself, as the sun goes forth when men are still asleep, and awakes them by his beams. Thus will Christ be the Alpha of His Church till He becomes the Omega. It is a work "never ending, still beginning." Christ has to cope with the multiplication of the human race, born in sin, and needing fresh grace. He has to cope with backsliding and apostasy;—with superstition, heresy, and infidelity;—with all the devices and depths of Satan. He who bears up the Church so long, in such a world, must be nothing less than divine. But all power is His, and therefore His Church shall go, as into all lands, so into all ages. It was the saying of Voltaire that Christianity would not survive the nineteenth century. But what has the nineteenth century not done for Christianity? It has sent the Gospel anew into all the world. It has gathered in the islands of the South, and shaken the mighty pagan faiths of India, China, and Japan! It has stirred up its missionaries

from the far West to preach the old faith in Egypt and in Palestine, and where the disciples first received the Christian name! It has devoted its noblest children to face death for Christ in depths of Africa which Voltaire never heard of, and it has even employed the press in Ferney that printed his own works—and it may be this very prophecy against the Gospel—to publish in new tongues the true oracles of God! We need not speak of the social effects of the Gospel in the same time. The nineteenth century has broken the fetters of the slave; it has grappled with the giant evils of intemperance and lust; it has given even to Socialism its best watchwords, borrowed from the Bible. Such a religion we may leave to His care who has watched over it, not in one century, but in all, till he fulfil all that is wrapped up in its birth-song, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men”; and till He who sowed in weakness return in power, to reap the harvest of the world!

§ 4. I remark in the *fourth* and last place, that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of Redemption, considered *as an endless development*. When we speak of eternity we feel that we are dealing with a quantity which, whether as applied to man’s natural endowment or destiny in Christ, overtasks all our powers alike of conception and description. I have seen on the wall of the house in Hamburg, where the German poet Klopstock lived and died, a board with this inscription, “Immortality is a great Thought.” This reflects a universal consciousness; and when we attempt to carry out the thought, either in regard to nature or to grace, we feel as when Newton expressed his sense of his earthly work in relation to the

Infinite, like children playing on the shore, while the great ocean lies beyond us. Did we know nothing but what the analogies of time teach us, we could not tell where the sons of men should be found relatively to other creatures of God, and even to other members of their own race in the developments of eternity—who should be at the top and who at the bottom of the infinite revolutions of its mighty wheel ! The great man of a village is unnoticed in a town. The leader of a town shrinks in the vastness of a metropolis. Thus, if we suppose creatures of different ranks from the whole universe of God gathered to the “city and palace of the great King”—what object would be there so high as to attract universal notice, so towering above all as to cast over all the shadow of pre-eminence ? This we know from revelation is the palace of Jesus Christ, who fills it without encroaching on the unity of God, or transcending the possibilities of true humanity. As the Son of the Highest, He is the heir of all things ; and as the exalted Head of the Church, He has received a name as great as He has inherited. The notices of Scripture assure us that other worlds have hung intent on His mediatorial enterprise, so that when He finally rises from earth, with His redeemed Church as the memorial of His victory, the God-man is welcomed by the homage of “all principality and power, and might and dominion.” The movement is so great as to create an epoch in celestial duration. He originated a new dispensation when He came to earth ; and something like this may take place when with all the redeemed He returns to heaven. Christ thus “openeth and no man shutteth,” holding in His hands “the golden key that opes the palace of

eternity." He is thus the Alpha of the everlasting ages, the morning star that leads in the endless day ! In Him the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily ; and thus in Him, the Infinite One and all His loyal and recovered creatures meet, and are satisfied. Angels see the ties that have already linked them with the destinies of redeemed men laid more fully open, and as their allegiance is deepened their blessedness is exalted. Specially to the ransomed themselves is Christ the Alpha of the Christian heaven. He has prepared the place ; He has provided the company ; He has measured out alike the rest and the activity ; He has diffused the love ; He has inspired the song. All cast their crowns at His feet ; and to Him, from ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, all laden with the burden of the same redemption, the one tribute rises, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood !" A blessedness like this, inaugurated by Christ, and quickened by His presence, can only begin, but never end. It has reached the image of Deity, which, the First and Last to all besides, is not so to itself. Henceforth there is futurity, but no hereafter ; a higher stage, but no higher state of being ; a path for endless ascent in heaven, but none for translation to a firmament above it ! And thus Christ may be said to be the Omega of the heavenly world, as He is its Alpha. He has united its beginning and its ending as in a golden circle. He has so gloriously consummated the being of the redeemed, that it can endure for ever without exhaustion or decay, without change or reconstruction. He has so wondrously built the celestial system, that it can supply themes of endless interest and ever-increasing joy. And in Himself He

has so concentrated all that makes heaven blissful and ennobling, that its riches must remain for ever riches that are "unsearchable," and its glory, a glory "to be revealed." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" the mighty expansions of our being, at all points and in all directions, that must take place in such vast periods, in such society, under such a Leader. We can only wonder at and adore the Sovereign kindness, which has reserved such a destiny for worms of the dust, children of wrath, sinners barely snatched from the scaffold, where they were about to expiate their crimes! But of all this destiny so boundless and unalterable, so sublime and ever-during, whether it lead into the white-robed companies of the redeemed, or amidst the shining ranks of angels, or beside the awful throne of God, Christ is the sum and the substance. And when it shall have extended to periods which no earthly mind can grasp, and which shall leave the histories of earth immeasurably behind, like a dim twinkling speck on the far horizon of the memory of childhood, Christ shall still rise before us in unfading, yea, in growing loveliness, Christ shall still supply all our joys, Christ shall still constrain our bursting gratitude, and be the burden of our ever new songs, as still our dwelling-place in all generations, as the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, as "the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the Ending, the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty!"

Who is there that would resist the attraction of the person, work, and saving grace of that great Being, whose glories I have feebly endeavoured to

shadow forth? What is man at his best estate? "A worm, a leaf, a blast, a shade;" the victim of folly and sin, soon to return to the grave, and to lie down in darkness worse than that of the grave! Is it for such a creature to reject an eternal salvation, an immortal Saviour, an unchanging Friend, who can reverse the whole curse which sin has brought upon our heads, and load us with infinite and inexhaustible blessing? Before you reject this Saviour think how you will face eternity without Him! Think to whom else you will commit your departing spirits! Think to whom else you will stretch out imploring arms as you plunge into the great hollow deep of futurity! O, do not lay a plan for life that will fail you in the hour of mortal agony! Do not calculate a scheme of happiness, that after its few guilty moments drags after it an eternal remorse, of which the bitterest pang shall be the rejection of the Saviour who brought His love so nigh! O, rather embrace His favour while the day of mercy lasts! At His cross you will see an eternity of woe fleeing away, and an eternity of glory drawing near to meet you with overflowing gladness! There Christ shall become the Alpha of your salvation; and the depths of your never-ending existence shall not witness the day that He shall withdraw His love. He shall save you to the uttermost of duration as to the uttermost of guilt; and His everlasting arms shall be around you, when earth and sky have fled away.—*Amen.*

III

CHRIST—HIS ENDURING NAME

“His name shall endure for ever.”—PSALM lxxii. 17.

“Is there any word from the Lord?” said the last Jewish king, in the crisis of his fate, to Jeremiah; and so we may ask: Are there any prophetic words of Scripture? and is this one of them? Prophecy will hardly be affirmed to be impossible; but is it recognisable? There are generally allowed to be *three* criteria, which must meet in a so-called prophecy to sustain its claims. *First, it must be uttered before the event.* This is obvious, if it is not to be reduced to fiction and make-believe. It becomes, without this check, a mere literary figure, like Milton’s putting into the mouth of Gabriel in the *Paradise Lost* in addressing Adam, a prophetic history of his descendants. Are we sure, then, that this psalm was written by inspiration before the event, and not derived from history? Bring it down as late as you will, till after the days of Solomon or any other wide-reigning Jewish king, was this a mere historic copy under the name of prophecy, of the past splendour of that period? I leave this to any reasonable judge of history; for there is really no history here

fulfilled, in the shape of a just, benignant, universal rule of the world, while Jewish history continues. *Secondly, a prophecy must foretell what cannot be foreseen by natural human powers.* We have indeed much knowledge of the future by the ordinary exercise of our faculties. All rests upon the anticipation that the future shall be as the past. Without this the world cannot stand a day; but science props it up, and statesmanship, and even ordinary sagacity,

“Till old experience doth attain
To something like prophetic strain.”

Still there is a vast region of the unknown, which cannot be predicted, even in the world of science; while in the region of probability, life is full of the most startling surprises and disappointments. Rationalism has gone so far as to say that the line between the natural and alleged supernatural here cannot be drawn, even in extreme cases; for we cannot tell to what human faculties can rise. But this cannot be admitted; for the life of Jesus Christ could not have been foreseen by human faculties; and hence rationalism itself, to escape this, is so anxious to empty the prophecies of their apparent meaning. If we have in this 72nd Psalm a real foreseeing of a vast moral and spiritual empire under one great head, that could not have been foreseen, nor anything else that is akin to it in Holy Scripture. Take only the 11th and 12th verses of the psalm: “Yea, all nations shall fall down before Him; all kings shall serve Him.” When did anything like this ever happen in human history through the means that follow, “For He

shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper"? The *third criterion of prophecy* is, that it *must be already so far fulfilled*. Till it is fulfilled it does not carry with it full weight from its own context and history. It cannot be an evidence, as it will one day be. But it begins to witness as soon as it begins to be fulfilled; and its light rises to the perfect day. Now we hold that this is already true of this psalm. It has long been speaking; but its voice is ever rising. It is bearing witness to a higher King and greater Kingdom than the world otherwise knows—a Kingdom which even on earth is rising in its effects in meekness, and truth, and righteousness; is growing in the number and influence of its subjects; and is surrounding with fresh monuments of perpetuity and guarantees for it, even in human history, the name of its divine Head and Founder. Therefore, without further argument that a greater than Solomon or other earthly monarch is here, I shall fill up the blank with the name of the Saviour of the world, and read it, "His name shall endure for ever."

In further discoursing, with divine help, on this great subject, I leave out of account, at least in the first instance, the strict and absolute eternity of the Redeemer's name in the future after death and the end of the world. This is true, and is involved, but I shall consider rather the perpetuity of his name in the world of time, and in relation to those powers and forces by which, as predicted, this shall be secured. And I reduce all remarks to these *two* general ones—*first*, that the name of our Saviour is *fitted* to endure; and *secondly*, that it is *destined* to endure.

I. *First*, then, the name of Jesus our Saviour is *fitted to endure*. Whatever endures in memory, does so by some law of fitness or persistence. We have the ordinary laws of association, so interesting and beautiful, not only as a study in the philosophy of mind, but as a part of the Providence of God. But I refer now to something different and more special—the laws by which the names of men endure in history. It is by these laws that other names endure, and specially the highest, the name of Jesus.

§ 1. It is fitted to endure by *virtue of the law which connects memory with greatness*. Let us allow as we will for the caprices of memory, and for the apparent accidents that connect the little with the great, it must be said that those who are remembered, so as to have some historic basis for their endurance, meet in this feature of greatness. The retreating cliff which is seen afar rises high into notice. It is the lofty mountain that casts the lengthened shadow and sends down the wide-rolling stream, and so it is the stars of first magnitude that live through the night. The great are remembered—great kings, great heroes, great sages, great saints—while the crowd must be forgotten. Jesus does not refuse to be commemorated according to this standard. He does not struggle indeed for fame, but for usefulness; but when He says, “Come unto Me,” “Follow Me,” he presupposes transcendent greatness. Even on the human side the greatness of Jesus is unexampled, the greatness of knowledge, of wisdom, of purity, of benevolence, of devotion—such greatness as amounts to absolute perfection. Shall our race then forget the only Man that

redeems it from imperfection and universal failure, and who is seated on the calm height of a Godlike life realised, while all others are toiling at the base? But we must bear in mind that Jesus is not only man but God, as truly God as man; and then how vast does this mystery of greatness become! This is the idea of His person that has taken hold of the Christian Church, and kept hold of it in every age, not a mere transient outshining of God in man, but a living union; not an ascent of man to God or Apotheosis, but a descent of God to man or Incarnation; not a mere word or formula, but a history where we see God and man blend without confusion, and leave the living print of both behind in one adorable Name. I ask, if this be not wonderful, memorable, certain not to be forgotten, while the sun shines, or the world endures? The monuments of hero-worship are not to be ranked with Jesus. They have not brought out even the greatness that lay in our nature. He has done so to the full, and added the unutterable greatness of union to God. On this greatness distance of time can make no impression. Other competitors cannot rise to outshine it. The evolutions of ages, the very blending of earth and heaven, can bring forth nothing so amazing as the "Word made flesh, and dwelling among us."

§ 2. *Secondly*, the name of Jesus is fitted to endure by virtue of the law which connects memory with service. "Gratitude," as has been finely said, "is the memory of the heart;" and fallen as the world is, history has not been untouched by its influence; for earth has not been altogether unmindful of its benefactors. But we see how little cause others

have left for grateful celebration in comparison with Jesus. They have been limited in their aims, short-sighted in their remedies, partial in their success. They have endeavoured to grapple with the evils of time. They have redressed the inequalities of man's relation to man. They have emancipated man from the bondage of the outward world, by the victories of civilisation and knowledge, which is power. But they have been arrested by the grave. They have not been able to reveal the unseen, far less to dispel the forebodings which it awakens, and to turn it into a minister of peace and joy. It is here that Jesus comes with a true and far-sighted estimate of the problem and with an adequate remedy. He redresses first our quarrel with God, and then heals our distempered relations with our human brethren. He provides for eternity before He provides for time. He builds a house of many mansions in which we are to live for ever, before he adjusts the frail tenements which we are to quit in a day. Our first and deepest necessities are to know the only true God ; to be reconciled to Him by an effectual atonement for our sins ; to be rescued from the dark thralldom of our worst enemy, and our own sinful lusts and passions ; to have life and immortality brought to light, and a security that we shall be fitted for it and brought to it, by Him whose Spirit is our Guide and Comforter. This is our true life, our deep salvation ; and when this Kingdom of God is thus sought at the call, and found by the grace of Jesus, all other things are added, all that we call civilisation, all that we call our earthly interests and the welfare of nations ; and He who travels, as in the greatness of His strength, on to eternity, will

take us with Him to our true home ! So long then as Jesus bestows on the souls of men blessings like these, and averts the opposite woes and terrors, the ignorance of God, the sense of His displeasure, the yoke of our depravity, the weariness of life and the fear of death, so long must His name endure ! Like the bow in the cloud, it must last till the darkness and tempest of our fallen nature pass away. And then its rays shall retreat into the pure sun, and shine in cloudless splendour on a happier world !

§ 3. *Thirdly*, the name of Jesus is fitted to endure *by virtue of the law which connects memory with suffering*. Which of our earthly days and nights are best remembered ? Those in which we sat in solitude and ate the bread of tears. Thus suffering leaves its mark in history. The quiet time fades out beside the troubled and sorrowful. Even destroyers and conquerors are better remembered by disaster than by victory—as Alexander by his premature death, Cæsar by his assassination, and Napoleon by his exile. How much more have the great benefactors of our race had their memories embalmed by suffering ; so that they are cherished as their works and endurances have cost them dear. The martyrdom of Socrates ; the persecutions of Galileo, who could not make heaven brighter save amidst earthly darkness ; the complicated trials of Columbus, who could not open up a new world without foretokens of the new field that he was opening to human sorrow ; the last days of Milton, who could only sing of Paradise in blindness, and fallen upon evil tongues ; and nearer our own days, the deaths of two American presidents, who could not free the slave or consolidate his freedom without

drawing down successively the vindictive stroke. These are lessons of which history is full, teaching us that service to man cannot strike its roots most deeply, except in the dark winter of neglect, opposition, and suffering, even unto death.

But how imperfect is every such image of the connection between the Saviour's sufferings and the enduring of his name ! All others were born to suffer, if not in that form in some other ; they were sinners, and could not escape even by labour and service to mankind. But Jesus was above this doom, and stooped to meet it—stooped from a height beyond all parallel. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." The "man of sorrows" stands alone. To all other benefactors He can say, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ?" Which of the martyrs has dared to say, "I lay down my life for the sheep" ? Which of them has, in dying, veiled heaven in darkness, responsive to the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me ?" It is and must be a sacrifice that stands alone, meeting by its depth of suffering, as by other stupendous attributes, the sins of the world, else why does this blood flow for their remission, why is the sinless made a curse, and the only perfect life the most afflicted ? Here the memories of earth unite with the songs of heaven, "He was slain for us ;" and wherever into the most distant future this story of redeeming love shall go, it must open the fountains of the great deep, and dissolve hearts in tears. It is not sympathy only

that is awakened, but through grace, repentance. "We look on Him whom we have pierced, and mourn." It is no wrong of others that is recorded, but our own. It cannot grow old, while its causes are still fresh. The sorrows of Jesus gathered their bitterness from the sins of generations yet unborn ; and hence His cross shall stand in immediate contact with the latest sinner of our race, His dying countenance fix on him through the darkness with sad and distinct impression, His dying groan reach to his very heart. "For thee, too, and as the curse of thy sin, am I stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted !"

II. I am brought now to the *second* point in this discourse, which is, that the name of the Saviour *is destined to endure*. Here it might be enough to say, "Such is the will of God, and such is His expressed purpose," and then to quote Scripture testimonies to this effect. But I shall endeavour rather to show how intimately the permanence of the Saviour's name is bound up with the plans and counsels of God, so that it does not admit of being torn from the future.

§ 1. I remark then, *first*, here, that the name of Jesus *is identified with the existence of the Church*. The Christian Church is a society built upon Christ's name ; and by the knowledge of this name the society is called into existence. The society is originated by the knowledge of its Founder ; and the remarkable thing is, that it cannot be perpetuated without the same knowledge. Now, herein is a grand peculiarity, which distinguishes Christ from inventors and founders in civil society. I can enjoy the comforts and arts of civilisation without knowing

the names of their authors. I cannot tell who first discovered the use of fire, or launched a vessel upon the deep, or applied the plough to agriculture. But my use of these improvements is not thereby precluded. So, even where the name is known, it is not needful for the possession of the benefit; for what multitudes make use of steam to cross land and sea, while knowing nothing of the name of Watt. So also trial by jury and representative government are blessings to those who are ignorant of our constitutional history; and in the very realm of moral truth those who have advanced the world may still retain no hold of memory, and the building will stand while the builder is forgotten. How different is it with the name of Jesus! Take it away, and the Church falls. Christianity is obliterated, or sinks in fragments! Take it away, and there is no pardon, no sanctification, no fellowship with God, according to his own word, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." It is true, and it is a sad truth, that numberless benefits in a Christian land like this come to those who refuse the saving knowledge of Jesus—it may be who have little knowledge of Him at all, as, for example, the outward rest of one day in seven. But I now speak of living Christianity and genuine Church fellowship; and this, I say, demands the inward knowledge of Jesus, so that upon every Christian is written His new name. And as this name thus quickens the Church to life, so does she proclaim it in all her acts and in all her ordinances. The Bible is His name written large; and she accounts it her great work to preserve and diffuse it. What book has ever had such a guardian? As in the

days of Syrian tyrants, the Maccabees confessed the Old Testament, so under pagan and papal Rome Christ's witnesses have died for the New ; while the missionaries of modern days have spent years of anxious labour in translating it, it may be into some rude tongue, if only the name of Jesus might be sung by once savage tribes over their lonely graves. What other book has now one hundred millions of copies of it in nearly three hundred languages, with myriads of preachers, whose chief work is to explain it, and ever-growing hosts of readers who learn from it one saving name? Why is this tide not arrested? Why does it sustain through growing centuries, not only all the friendly but all the adverse literature, that would otherwise sink to the bottom? Not by Scripture only, read and preached, does the Church hold up the name of Jesus. It is entwined with every act of worship ; with praise the Church ascribes glory and power not only to Him that sitteth upon the throne, but unto the Lamb ; and with prayer, for all that she asks, she asks in His name. It is enstamped upon the Sabbath, for it is the "Lord's" day and the memorial of His rising. It stands at the outer gate in Baptism, uniting the Son with the Father and the Holy Ghost ; and it is enshrined in the inmost sanctuary, where by bread and wine the Lord's death is showed forth till He come ! What simple, yet imperishable, monuments are these, not local and temporary, like those which they have supplanted, but uniting the freshness of novelty with the steadfastness of observance, and by a blessed reaction increasing the very devotion to which they owe their birth ! Yea, could these outward memorials for a

time cease; could the Bible be torn from the Church; could worship be proscribed; could the Sabbath be driven into the same profanation with the other days of the week,—the name of Christ would survive, not as a dead and traditional, but a living memory; for every scattered and silent Christian would be a living epistle of Christ, recalling by his patience, fortitude, and forgiving love the image of Jesus! As the name of Jehovah was given to the high priest in the days of old, and could not perish amidst backsliding and trouble, so the name of Jesus is given to every member of the New Testament Church, as one of a chosen generation and royal priesthood, and in the darkest hour shall not be lost from its golden cincture, but shall shine forth from the forehead of all the sealed ones, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever!”

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that the name of Jesus Christ is *bound up with the history and prospects of mankind*. This name is a key to the history of the world. It is not without reason that history is divided into two great periods, before Christ and after Christ. Even Renan has said that in the five monarchies of Daniel you have the first philosophy of history; and if any unbeliever would attempt it, could he make a better division of the world's history in dividing it, by the era of Nabonassar, or the flight of Mohammed, or the great French Revolution? The rise and fall of empires were designed to prepare the world for Christ, by bringing the world under one government, and facilitating the diffusion of the gospel. The struggles of philosophy led the human mind up to the verge of the great

mysteries which He alone could disclose. The very systems of false religion were overruled to nurse the insatiable cravings of man as a religious being, and, through their proved failure, make him sigh for higher light and truth. His advent was thus "in the fulness of the time," and while it was "the consolation of Israel," it was to the pagan world as "life from the dead." It introduced a principle of permanence into a frame of things decaying and waxing old, and at the same time a principle of mighty renovation. It was the outburst of a moral greatness that confronted, overawed, and at last converted a world sunk in selfishness and degeneracy. It was the signal of hope, of enterprise, of progress in all directions. Henceforth the stream of history was turned into other channels, into channels which the Gospel of Christ prepared for it; and there is no great advance of the human race since that period, which is not more or less directly connected with the Saviour's name. Strauss himself has granted that Jesus proclaimed, as founded on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, a morality perfect as to the duty of the individual, but has denied it to be complete in regard to the family and the State. Yet is there anything so marvellous in history, as that this simple Teacher, who rises among a despised people, who has no experience in human affairs, and who leaves the world when statesmen and lawgivers are only at their first studies, should have taken hold of the greatest of human institutions—the family, and left on it for ever the mark of justice, of purity, and of love, so as to expel polygamy, exclude divorce, and turn the very slave into a brother beloved, in a sense

undreamt of by Lycurgus and Solon, by Plato and Cicero, and all the Roman Cæsars? The civilisation of Christian nations is not only outwardly different; where true to itself it is pervaded by a new spirit which reconciles order with liberty, lifts up the poor, heals the sick, and strives incessantly to right all social wrongs and inequalities, and one day to make all the nations learn war no more! If history has turned back at any point, it has been where it has forsaken Him, as in yielding to the Arabian prophet, or sinking into the darkness of the middle ages. Wherever it has marched again, it has been with His word and gospel in the van. How is the world still to move if Christ be left behind? Is it through the progress of secular knowledge? Let this have all honour if knowledge strengthen virtue, and speak of immortality. But what if the awful and silent stars in all their mighty spaces proclaim no Father's love, and tell of no Saviour who sits above them? Is it through the advance of liberty? And where is liberty except in Christian nations, and what is liberty if Christ makes not free? Is it through the spread of commerce? And do you mean the commerce that overruns Africa with poisonous drinks, and China with opium, that has hardly severed itself from the slave trade, or may make the nations flame into war through resentments and jealousies, which even a higher commerce can breed? Or is it, once more, through the purifying and ennobling influence of an independent morality, a morality which has shaken off all creed and history? And where is such an independent morality to be found, a morality of which man must be at once the author, the model,

and the sanction, and which treats an Almighty and All-perfect God as an alien, and the pattern of all virtue and goodness as an intruder? If we resign ourselves to prospects like these, our hope is gone. The key-stone is torn from the arch, and we sink into a sullen lethargy and despair, from which no charm can arouse us! Blessed be God, we do not thus despair of our race, any more than the Roman of his country! The Gospel of Christ has not stayed its flight, but, like a mighty eagle renewing its youth, is preparing to soar into other climes, and through all ages! We may not live to see it, but the issue is certain; and turning our gaze like the dying patriarch upon his brethren, we may say, "I die, but God shall surely visit you!" A generation may fall in the wilderness, but the name of Christ shall, like the pillar of cloud, lead on to every predicted conquest. What shall the change be, when the name that is above every name shall float over a whole ransomed world? Then the difficulty will be in remembering the darkness which has passed away! Through vast periods (we cannot think it otherwise), "men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." The plan of the world shall be seen in daylight clearness, and the struggles of ages shall be only like the pains of childbirth. No danger then of misreading prophecy, or of underrating its greatness. The event shall alone interpret words like these—"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

§ 3. In the *third* place, and lastly, I remark that the Saviour's name is destined to endure, *because it is committed to the watchful care of the Godhead*. Even

higher interests are here concerned than the salvation of men or the future of the world. The glory of God in the highest is at stake, and over that glory God will watch. God the Father sees here the brightest manifestation of Himself, for He thus reveals the fulness of power, the depth of wisdom, the beauty of holiness, the tender radiance of mercy, all shining in the face of Jesus Christ. The continued display of this glory to men and angels, is the last end of redemption, the fulfilment by the Father of the prayer of the Son, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee!" Shall this last prayer then be defeated? Shall these supreme manifestations of God, which, pent up from everlasting days, have at last broken forth upon the universe, be recalled? And shall the word of promise that has gone out of His mouth be made void—"I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations?" Then no more should heaven be as bright as ever with the divine glory; no more should there be joy in the presence of the angels over fresh returning sinners; no more to the principalities and powers in heavenly places should there be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. Must we not say also, that the ever-living Son of the Highest must watch over the glorification of His own name? He who has all power given to Him in heaven and earth, cannot be disappointed by His own act of the travail of His soul, or fail to gather home the Church which He has redeemed with His precious blood. Calmly He sits above the strife of earthly tongues—above the vain clamours of a world which is mad upon its idols—above the impotent shouts of those who dream that they have

for ever buried His name! Not as a frail mortal in his tomb, who must leave his name to the tongue of calumny, to the tooth of envy, to the breath of oblivion, but as God in His temple does He hear; and behold, in rising up, He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!"

Nor is the Son of God alone in this work of self-vindication. The Spirit also beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth, and engaged as the Spirit of Jesus to testify of Him. As the wind bloweth where it listeth, His presence comes, and the name of Jesus remains to tell that it has been there. Silently, without stroke or sound, the stony heart is changed, and another soul is added to the temple of redemption. We have heard of the "spirit of liberty" which tyrants cannot chain, and which driven from one country retreats to another. We have heard of the "spirit of truth" which edicts and persecutions cannot repress, and which driven inward lives all the deeper in the soul. We have heard of the "spirit of law" which lays its arrest on the guilty conscience, and to escape from which were to escape from our inmost self. But what are these to the invisible, impalpable, irresistible energy of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who walks through all place and all time, and works when and where and how He pleases! This can smite down the enemies of Christ, and make them rise His friends. This can undo every hostile combination as a thread of tow when it touches the fire. This can make a nation be "born in a day," and call for the things that are not, and they come! If, then, this Spirit has received a commission to work till the end of time, who shall stay His operation?

The pride of man endeavoured to 'defy the winds and fetter the sea. But let it lay an arrest, if it can, on this ethereal force mightier than the lightning, or shut out those celestial sunbeams which imprint for ever on the soul of man, the living image of Jesus Christ! No; so long as the Creator-Spirit is greater than all creatures on earth, or under the earth, He must descend in His sevenfold energy, and by the eternal efficacy of the water and the blood, bear witness with them "that Jesus is the Christ."

Thus do Father, Son, and Holy Ghost conspire to perpetuate the name which is wonderful. Our God is of one mind, and who can turn Him? The gods of the nations are vanity. They have not been able to preserve their own names, much less those of their worshippers. Their temples are fallen, and with them the names they took under their protection. They are gone; their memorial is perished with them. All-devouring time has swallowed up not only man, but the gods that were his children. But our God is the true God; He is the living God, and an everlasting King. Eternity is His possession; and whom He will, He can make its heir. By Himself He has sworn that His Son's name shall endure for ever; and it shall be performed. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

If now I have this day spoken in the hearing of any of you who are still strangers to the saving power of Christ's name, let me beseech you to remain so no longer. What will it avail you that other generations are blessed in Jesus if you are unblessed by Him? What will it avail if His name

endures even for ever, if, through your own fault, it pass you by, without leaving you with an interest in those saving benefits which it offers to you and to all, in this "accepted time and day of salvation"? It will be like the sun shining upon your graves, or upon that dark prison-house which you have chosen, and whence you can no more come forth to enjoy his beams. O, seize the present moment; for to you it is worth all succeeding ages—yea, more than worth all that will follow, so far as you have any warrant, if it pass unimproved!

And let those of us to whom the name of Jesus has become unspeakably dear, and sacred, and venerable, give it at all times, and specially this day, the homage which is its due. We are about to make remembrance of it in obedience to His dying command. Let our commemoration be in some measure worthy of the sublime and glorious object. At other times we cherish it with unseen affection; we are required this day to hold it up in public display. Let us surround it with silent adoration and grateful song. Let there be a depth in our devotion worthy of the gathered sentiments of ages that are past, and fitted in its measure to give some impulse to the sacred tide for ages to come. Let there be something in our feelings that shall sound like a response to the rapt utterance of the prophet, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" something that shall rise as an echo to the sublime message of the angel: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever,

and of His kingdom there shall be no end ;” or something that shall break forth as an anticipation of the great voices that shall be heard in heaven. “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”—*Amen.*

IV

CHRIST'S GLORY, THE SHAME OF HIS ENEMIES

“His enemies will I clothe with shame : but upon Himself shall
His crown flourish.”—PSALM cxxxii. 18.

THIS beautiful psalm was evidently written in connection with some dedication festival. It does not seem to me impossible that it should have been called forth by the greatest of all such festivals in the history of ancient Israel, the dedication of the temple of Solomon. If so, there would be great propriety in recalling in the opening verses the anxieties of David—anxieties amounting to “afflictions”—in connection with that great enterprise, and in contrasting the wandering and unsettled state of the ark, as now at Ephratah or Shiloh, and then at Kirjath-jearim (“city of woods”), before it found a resting-place in Jerusalem. This question, however, of date and occasion is less important ; and I shall now suppose that after this psalm had been used on any great occasion, and then published (as it is evident that these psalms might be), it had fallen into the hands of some pagan scholar, belonging to some one of the surrounding tribes, and that

he had been led to compare the religion here embodied with his own. We cannot but be struck with the thought of the difference that he would find. No doubt there were some resemblances, as from the nature of religion was to be expected. There was a sanctuary, and there was also an ark, something like which seems not to have been unknown in some of the sanctuaries of paganism. There were also "priests," and a king interested in the worship of his subjects, which a pagan could no doubt find at home. But, with such resemblances, the prevailing feeling of our heathen student would be one of surprise. Here is the worship of only one God, and no mention of any other. The benefits of his worship are set forth as moral and spiritual; for the priests were to be clothed with "salvation;" and the "saints" (not a common name for other worshippers) were to "shout aloud for joy;" and though the "poor" are alluded to as likely to be "satisfied with bread," this could hardly be taken in the common sense, but must denote something more deep and mystic than entered into ordinary pagan devotions.

But what, I think, would have struck a pagan most in this psalm would have been the stress laid upon David and his throne, with the continuance of his posterity. "What can all this avail?" he might ask in wonder. "The kings in my religion are little or nothing. It does not greatly matter to any but themselves whether they reign on, or their line ends; but here are a people to whom it is the highest favour of heaven, and apparently necessary for what they call salvation, that this David of theirs or his seed should be always on the throne." Now,

let us suppose that this pagan, unable to solve these difficulties, had taken them to a Jew of his acquaintance, the latter, if a man of intelligence and piety, might have cleared them up somewhat in this way: "You are right in your interpretation. We do expect in connection with our religion a great Deliverer, who is to be a King. He is to be a descendant and successor of David. Unless the line continues, this Deliverer cannot come, and cannot fulfil our religious hopes." This answer, I think, in the mouth of a pious Jew of these ancient days, would have satisfied such inquiries. But let us suppose that they were taken to a modern Jew, who is still a Jew believing in this book of Psalms as a divine book, but not a Christian; what explanation could he give? Where is the descendant of David sitting on his throne? If he should come now, could he be recognised when the division of tribes has been lost and confounded? Where is anything in the world of visible splendour and progress in your religion such as this psalm holds forth? In the fallen condition of the Jews, without either a king or a priest, there is a visible contradiction to this psalm when applied to the literal Israel; and only the Christian can find his way through it, for he believes that the great successor of David has come already, and come of David's line; he believes also that as David was head of the Church, as well as of the State, Jesus, as the Messiah, has come into that place, exalting and prolonging David's kingdom, and blessing not only all believing Jews, but the whole true Israel of God. Thus the Christian finds a grand, a coherent, an ever-rising fulfilment of this and other prophecies;

and as these have been already so wonderfully accomplished in Him, who is at once the root and the offspring of David, the Christian expects this witness of history to go still farther, making good from age to age this Divine promise: "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon Himself shall His crown flourish." Looking for Divine help in explaining and applying a text so lofty, but also so solemn, I shall speak *first of the shame of Christ's enemies*, and *secondly, of the honour of Christ's crown*.

I. I have then, first, to speak of the *shame here predicted as awaiting the Messiah's enemies*. It is deeply sad to think that the Saviour of the world should have had enemies. But no one can deny the fact, else why was He rejected and crucified? Why was His gospel so violently resisted in the Roman empire? Why is earnest and living Christianity opposed and persecuted still? And why have the claims of Christ to give law to the world been, in wide circles of opinion, so vehemently put aside? We dare not make light of this, as if it were mere unhappy misunderstanding, and as if all men were in their hearts seeking the same things with Christ, and only differing from Him by mistake. We believe rather that Christ is too high, too pure, too loving for this fallen world; and that it is because He is too strict and uncompromising a witness for God, that He calls forth the dislike of all, till they are inwardly changed by His spirit. This, therefore, is a matter to which we all do well to give heed; for unless we are converted and brought round to be His friends, we lie open to the sweep of this condemnation and threatening. It is taken for

granted here, as everywhere, that Christ's enemies are in the wrong, so that shame awaits them; and it seems to me that this shame is *threefold*.

§ 1. There is, *first*, the shame of *being detected*. Many of Christ's enemies are secret. They assume the disguise of friendship, and like Judas betray the Son of man with a kiss. These shall all sooner or later be unmasked; and it will be a shameful thing to be convicted of the sin of hypocrisy. Fallen as human nature is, false profession is always condemned by natural conscience; and of what punishment shall they be held worthy who, like Ananias and Sapphira, shall be found to have "lied not to men but to God"? This began with our Saviour's very birth, and the first mention of Him as a King. "Go, and search diligently for the young child," says wicked Herod to the wise men, "and when ye have found Him bring me word again that I may come and worship Him also," while his only purpose was to destroy the innocent Saviour. Now, all these pretences of friendship, which have held such a place in the history of Christ's Church, shall one day be exposed in their hollowness, and shall cover those who have made them with shame. But it may be thought that this cannot be the case, where Christ's enemies have practised no concealment, but have been open and avowed in their hostility. But is this the case to the full extent? Is there no remaining reserve and darkness? It is no doubt better where the enemy does not transfigure himself into an angel of light; but is the whole truth absolutely avowed? Have those who have assailed Christ and His gospel laid open their hearts to the very bottom? Are we to suppose that they were

always resisting Christ from the very motive they gave out, and that no other mingled with and coloured it, and that nothing woke them up to the strife but the pure love of truth, of reason, of justice, of liberty, of philanthropy, of everything true and honest and of good report? I am far from judging the opponents of Christianity, and I know that Christians have not been always blameless in conducting their controversies with them. But is it possible to be perfectly fair and candid towards a religion that inculcates such humility, such purity, such love as the gospel of Jesus Christ does, that puts man so much in the wrong against his Maker, and demands so complete a surrender to a strict and sovereign will? We dare not, brethren, be more tender as Christ's followers than was Christ Himself; and does He ever grant that men in their quarrel with Him are actuated simply and absolutely by praiseworthy motives? Does He not rather say, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil"? I do not deny that among those who unhappily resist and oppose the gospel of Christ, there are those who are not conscious to themselves of the evil which they do. There is a certain sincerity which cannot be refused them—but, is sincerity always a sufficient vindication? Is there no guilt in haste, in prejudice, and in sitting in judgment on the Christian claims, while cherishing those tempers and yielding to those influences which, if Christianity be true, will need to be renounced and resisted? We can hardly have the case of a man more sincere than was the apostle Paul in opposing Christianity. He was a man of

pure life. He was a man, as he supposed, on the side of religion and zealous for the truth, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." And yet, did he afterwards justify himself when he came to know better his own heart? He saw that he had yielded to prejudice; that he had been misled by pride and self-righteousness; and that there had been a secret bitterness and cruelty in his spirit which he confessed and deplored. "I was a persecutor and a blasphemer and injurious." He did not condemn himself as having all the while known better, but he felt that he ought to have known better. He does not say, that in being at last divinely taught he obtained "justice," but "mercy." "Nevertheless I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." How needful is it then that all of us should search our own hearts and try our own ways, lest we be found laying up for ourselves an inheritance of shame. It will be sad indeed to remain at the last defenceless before the bar of our own consciences, self-convicted of unfairness and wrong towards the Best and Highest, and with a memory that we shall be able neither to escape nor to bear.

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that, to Christ's enemies, there is the shame of *being defeated*. It is not denied that opposers have gained and will still gain many advantages over Christ's cause. In the Old Testament age it often was so. In periods like the days of Elijah or of the Babylonian captivity, the shame seemed to cover the Church, and she took up this sad complaint, "Lord, where are Thy former loving-kindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in

Thy truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people." Still, the campaign is not decided by a single battle; nor the war by a single campaign; and when the war is ended the shame falls not on the side of Christ's friends, but of His enemies. The Old Testament kingdom lasted and served its purpose, till the Messiah was born, its perfect and all-sufficing fruit, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel. Although all His life through He was assailed, and at last brought to the dust of death, He yet finished the work given Him to do, and by His resurrection cast the shame and the dishonour on the side of His enemies. The early triumphs of the cross completed their first great discomfiture; and though all the powers of earth and hell were arrayed against the Saviour's throne, the open victory of Christianity over paganism was like the earliest echo of the great words of the Apocalypse, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!" Since that age we know that there have been many reactions, and that the history of Christianity has often been dark and chequered. But this new and mighty force has never disappeared. In the march of centuries it has always been gaining ground; and its power to revive itself, unlike every other religion, and to hold its own in the face of science, of civilisation, of all industrial and political revolutions, nay, to turn them to its purpose, as well as to lift up the lowest barbarism to freedom and manhood in Christ, is the strongest confirmation of its claims, and a prophecy, added to all in Scripture, of its certain triumph. Where then shall its

opposers in the end be? We would indulge in no mere human sense of superiority, but ascribe our own hope of a humble share in the victories of this divine kingdom, solely to sovereign mercy. But all the more, because we long to see others repent, and, on this condition only, share our hopes, do we repeat, with the promises, the warnings of Holy Scripture. "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him, and His enemies shall lick the dust." "Dust shall be the serpent's meat." "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." Can we ever sufficiently deplore the end of those who incur such a doom, and tremble lest we should share it, driven away into darkness, self-condemned, as having resisted truth, abused clemency, and outraged the limits of a forbearance that could not be always defied, as we struggled blindly to overturn a throne that was irradiated not only with the light of mercy, but guarded by the thunder of omnipotence?

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that it is a part of the shame of the Messiah's enemies *to be over-ruled for His glory*. Great, and indeed impenetrable, as is the mystery of evil in God's universe, we can at least believe this, however we fail completely to understand it, that evil is somehow over-ruled for God's glory. This does not abate the malignity of evil in itself as utterly contrary to God's nature, or involve God in the least complicity with it. But it is plain that if God, remaining "in utter antagonism to evil, can thus over-rule it, it is a yet greater perfection of God so to do, and involves a yet greater humiliation of His enemies. They thus contribute, against their thought and will, to the exaltation of the

kingdom which they seek to overthrow. This appears most strikingly of all in regard to *the design of evil powers in the Saviour's crucifixion*. It was said to the Tempter in the first oracle of mercy, "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel;" and it was by the bruising of the Saviour's heel, that Satan led most visibly to the downfall of his own kingdom. If he had not conspired to destroy Jesus the world would not have been redeemed. It was no doubt a special gratification to the malice of the Wicked One when the Prince of Life expired on the cross, amidst the apparent failure of His whole saving plan. But how dearly was all this purchased, for in the very act of dying, the Saviour fulfilled all the prophecies, sealed the everlasting covenant with blood, ransomed the souls that had so long groaned under Satan's dominion, and acquired the dearest claim to His people's homage, as having poured out His soul unto death! This was the issue of all Satan's machinations, of the treachery of Judas, of the envy of the chief priests, of the rage of the people, of the league between Pilate and Herod, to accomplish the Saviour's sacrifice, to lift Him up on the cross that all men might see Him, and to furnish Him with the instrument of His perpetual victory. The cross also prepared the way for the resurrection, in which captivity was led captive, as when, in an ancient triumph, the warlike instruments and inventions of the enemy were borne aloft to illustrate the resources and power of the victor. The same great law of an over-ruling and compensating Providence is seen in *the persecutions and sufferings of the Christian Church*. "Devout men carry Stephen to his burial and make great lamentation over him."

But soon it dawns that there is cause for more than lamentation. The witnesses of Christ are scattered into new regions. The attention even of the rulers of the world is arrested, as we find that in Roman history, the first notices of Christianity are in connection with martyrdoms ; and the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the Church. Even in Jewish days, how much was drawn from the sufferings of Egypt, which have thus endeared the religion of Moses to a late posterity ; and have not the struggles of our own forefathers for truth and liberty, given these a hold not easy to be shaken, and which will make us cling all the more to Christ's cross and crown ? "The wise is taken in his own craftiness," and the hands of enemies maintain the fire by which the bush burns on unconsumed ! This same great law is seen to be exemplified *in the arguments of unbelief against the gospel*. It was divine when it descended from heaven ; but the abortive efforts of successive ages to meet and to refute it, have made its divinity more palpable. Why has not all the learning, all the ingenuity, all the wit and eloquence of so many able men of different periods and countries, bringing all their diverse powers to the task, availed by this time to number Christianity with the dead ? Why have we not ceased to hear of these illusions of the prophets of Israel, and these fancies and legends of the evangelists ? If the Bible were mortal, surely it ought by this time to have been killed beyond recovery ; but still the labour lasts, and the battle is not only renewed, but varied, from year to year. Does not this then turn out to be the office of the advocates of unbelief, to reveal in different ways their own weakness, and the vitality of the opposite cause ?

"I have now," says Thomas Paine, at the end of the first Part of his *Age of Reason*, written about a hundred years ago, "gone through the Bible as a man would go through a wood, with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie, and the priests may, if they can, replant them. They may perhaps stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow." Some time ago, I wanted a copy of the work from which this extract is taken. I had difficulty in finding one in the capital of Scotland; and it might have been the same in Philadelphia; while it is not too much to say that for every Bible that was in Scotland a century ago there are now twenty. The following words of Voltaire are equally authentic, "I am tired of hearing it repeated that twelve men were sufficient to establish the Christian religion; I am anxious to show that it needs but one to destroy it." Is Voltaire, then, the one man who has succeeded in destroying, even in France, the Christian faith? I was present in Paris in 1878, when the centenary of Voltaire was being celebrated, and I was struck with the comparative stillness in which it passed over. Nor could I help asking, whether France, in giving to Voltaire the place which still remained, was not parting every year with the confessed power with which, in comparison with other lands, she had ruled the world? Facts like these, and there are many others, show how little the prophecies of those who deny true prophecy are to be regarded; and how much more weighty are the words of one of the true seers to one of the greatest monarchs of the world, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed;

and the kingdom shall not be left to other people ; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

II. Having considered thus far the shame of the Messiah's enemies, I have now to speak, as led by the text to do, of *the honour of His crown*. "But upon Himself shall His crown flourish." This brings out Christ's relation to His subjects, as the first clause brings out His relation to His enemies. I am led to remark that this crown is *threefold*.

§ 1. There is, *first*, the *crown of pardoning mercy*. Christ differs in this from earthly sovereigns, that one of the grand benefits of His reign, and one which most illustrates its glory, is pardon. Now, no doubt, it is the prerogative of an earthly sovereign to show mercy to criminals ; and this has been spoken of as the brightest jewel in a monarch's crown. But to how small a portion of his subjects has any earthly monarch ever the opportunity of showing mercy, since the criminals are a small minority, and the great majority of the people never break any public law? With Christ's government it is entirely different. Every one of His subjects has been a rebel, and has been absolved from a tremendous offence, so that the honour of exercising mercy upon His subjects precedes every other act of Christ's administration towards them. His is the blood which has flowed for their ransom. His is the intercession by which they are reconciled to the Father, and the whole Church addresses to Him this one song, "Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." There is here the

glory of an amnesty which has no limits, and of a pardon which has no reserves or qualifications. Earthly sovereigns can only venture to pardon in rare cases, where there is some mitigation of the guilt, or some obscurity in the evidence. But Christ can pardon those whose sins are of scarlet and crimson dye, and He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Nor is this pardon confined to one occasion, but goes through the whole life of every one of His subjects. As they are taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," so are they taught to say daily, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ;" so that His throne is truly a throne of grace, to which the burdened saint comes not less than the repentant sinner, and equally finds help in time of need. Let us suppose that all the subjects of this realm daily needed pardon, and daily received it from the sovereign, what an impulse would this give to the sense of loyalty, and what an honour would it be to a government, to be so securely founded on the rock of justice, that this unlimited dispensation of pardon did not shake its steadfastness, but only added to the tenderness of allegiance, and to the warmth of patriotism. This is the permanent honour of the crown of Christ, that it can bless every guilty conscience with a free pardon, and yet fasten the law more constrainingly on the heart ; and while Christ can do this, He does not need to fear the taunts and scoffs of His enemies. While the Pharisee is coldly frowning, the tears of the woman that was a sinner are warmly flowing and bathing the Saviour's feet. The homage of ten thousand broken hearts that He has healed is going up to Him from all parts of the world at

once. Those who have resisted other voices melt at His, and in the sense of His forgiving love find their heaven begun. O may this be our experience ! And then in the blessedness of pardon we shall have an evidence of Christ's power to save which will silence every doubt and questioning, and lead us to exclaim, " It is God that justifieth, who is He that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us ! "

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that this crown flourishes upon the Messiah *as the crown of sanctifying grace*. An earthly kingdom makes no claim to exert on its subjects a sanctifying influence. It punishes crime, but it cannot go far in reforming the criminal ; at least, his reformation is not its first work, and as to sanctification, it dares not use so lofty a word. It can only deal with what is outward, and hence it cannot take cognisance of the heart ; and if it could, it could only fathom its evil, but without any power to meet or cure it. But Christ's rule begins with the heart, and from it works outward ; and it has a sovereign remedy for the evils of the heart which to every government, and even to everything else on the earth that calls itself a religion, is wholly unknown. That remedy is a new truth, and, not less, a new force wherewith to apply it to human nature. The new truth is the love of God in Christ Jesus ; the new force is the influence of the Holy Ghost. By the grand argument of Divine love, and not of Divine love only, but of Divine justice, as seen in such glorious harmony in the cross, Christ touches a spring in the human heart inaccessible to every other hand ; and all believers confess its untold

power. "We love Him because He first loved us." Thus, "love is the fulfilling of the law," and hence a kingdom is created of truly obedient hearts, who long to do all things that Christ has commanded, and love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. But the other great appliance in Christ's kingdom is not less wonderful; even the influence of the Holy Ghost to work with this new truth, and to impress it on the soul. Here comes in this grand article in the Christian creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." There is not only a new projectile; but a new kind of artillery from which to discharge it. Then it smites the rock and breaks it in pieces. Nor is the heart only broken into fragments of stone; it is melted, and upon it, as a heart of flesh, the Holy Ghost writes all Christ's laws, so that Christ really lives in His people by this ever-working and ever-fashioning Spirit, so that His kingdom is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!" What a crown of honour is it to the Saviour thus to make all things new in the soul of man; to change the blackest and hardest heart into the image of His own tenderness and purity; and to people His kingdom with such creations of spiritual power, that the first heavens and earth are not remembered, nor come into mind! The figures used by the prophets in announcing these changes are not more striking than true. Were the wolf literally to dwell with the lamb, or the leopard to lie down with the kid, this would not be half so amazing as these transformations of the heart of man, "from fool to wise, from earthly to divine!" If they were multiplied, they would more than bring in a golden age, as a Paradise regained is more

wonderful than a Paradise never lost ! But, meanwhile, to every soul that is saved, there is a golden age begun ; there is a turning from darkness unto marvellous light ; there is a sense of resurrection power, which is a quickening of the dead, and a calling of the things that were not as though they were ! Would that the Church of Christ by her prayers and efforts, would increase these trophies of converting and sanctifying grace ! Let us meet an age that denies the supernatural, by a fresh outburst of it on the field of human salvation, and let us, in the view of the many and unhallowed denials of Christ's reign, implore the Highest thus to vindicate it as of old. " And now, Lord, behold their threatnings, and grant that, with all boldness, Thy servants may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of Thy Holy Child Jesus."

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that there is the crown of *divinely-bestowed and endless blessedness*. As the result of pardon and of sanctification, the worst evils of the fall are already cured. And there is a blessedness in Christ's present reign which fulfils the ancient prophecy, " Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem ; for the Lord hath comforted His people ; He hath redeemed Jerusalem !" The soul that is pardoned goes in peace, and the heart that is sanctified is filled with joy in the Holy Ghost. But in the present life the sense of pardon is often clouded ; the work of sanctification is uncompleted ; the " clouds return after the rain ;" and the remaining body of sin casts its shadow of sorrow. Besides, there are evils introduced by the fall which grace does not, in this present dispensation, remove—

care, suffering, death, which press upon the subjects of Christ's kingdom as truly as upon others, and make them, with the whole creation, groan and travail in pain together until now. Against these evils, all human kingdoms are wholly powerless ; and they themselves are mortal, and bow, sooner or later, to the stroke of dissolution. But Christ, who has the power of an endless life, has received a kingdom which cannot be moved. He sets it up to abolish in the end all the marks of the curse, and to bring in a state of things, in the experience of all His people, where there shall be nothing to hurt or to destroy. His kingdom shall pass into a stage, when not only the redemption of the soul shall be perfect, but when the body shall be emancipated from those terrible evils and humiliations, which were imposed here as the penalty of sin. Of this glorious change we can only speak as "men that dream." Who can describe the Saviour's second coming to this world, where His first coming was with such humility, and where so long He has been despised and rejected of men ! How vast will then be His kingly state, and how overwhelming the outburst of his power ! His advent will end the *reign* of sin for ever, which, though still sadly subsisting in those who have resisted His kingdom of grace, will be openly defeated and driven headlong to destruction, while in His people who hail His coming, sin shall vanish and give place to the brightness and joy of heaven ! The ravages of death shall be instantaneously repaired, and all His saints clothed with their resurrection body. The scenes of judgment, amidst unutterable pomp and awe, shall proclaim the glory of this king, to whom

alone the Father has committed this assize, and the innumerable company of angels shall at once ratify and execute its awards! What kingdom had ever such a consummation? And yet its close in one form is but its opening in another; and through the boundless periods of eternity, those who have loved and trusted its Head, amidst the apparent weakness of His government, shall share His sublime and inconceivable exaltation! O to be faithful to Him now; faithful amidst temptations, sorrows, deaths, the coldness of earth, and the malice of hell, for how transcendently will the joys of that coronation day over-pay all the tribulations and conflicts of this sin-burdened pilgrimage, as He addresses to all His people the words, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

In closing this discourse let me exhort the people of Christ to rejoice in such a Saviour and Lord. "Let the children of Zion be very joyful in their King!" With such a Head you cannot be defeated or really injured, and all apparent evil must work for good. Take hold then upon His strength, and fortify yourselves by His exceeding great and precious promises. "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." You may not always be able to say this, but if the last clause be your creed, the first also should be your utterance. And do Thou, O glorified Redeemer, strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees of us Thy servants! and grant us, through the victory of faith,

a part in that reign, whereby already all things are put under Thy feet!

Let me also, as bound by fidelity to the souls of men to do, warn all who reject the salvation of Christ, of their criminality and danger. All Christians believe that they were once in such a state, and they cannot forbear to testify this to you. The greatness of Christ, and the brightness of His light, have made neutrality impossible. "He that is not with me is against me; he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Awake then, ere it be too late, to the voice alike of duty and of safety! Make submission to your Creator; make supplication to your Judge; make confession to your Saviour! Regard His solemn warnings, which are not the fulminations of despotic power, but the remonstrances of just authority, softened by the tenderness of forbearance and long-suffering; and let the pleadings of His love subdue your obduracy. It is not every sovereign who, when his enemies are at his mercy, thinks chiefly of their rescue and deliverance. It is not every one who pursues them to the last verge of opportunity with entreaties, and, when all has failed, breaks out into lamentations like these, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are for ever hid from thine eyes!" O let not such importunities fail with you; "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!"
—*Amen.*

V

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."—JOHN XX. 21-23.

IN this first interview of our risen Lord with His disciples as a body, there seem to be *two* ends which He has in view. The one is to assure them of the *reality* of the resurrection; the other is to open up its *bearings and consequences*. Hence, for the *first* purpose, He met them with the old salutation of peace upon His lips, and then showed them His hands and His side, that He might convince them of the truth of His rising and of His identity, not only in body, but also in mind. All this had the desired effect, and the disciples "were glad when they saw the Lord." But beyond this was the *second* and kindred end of our Lord's words and acts in this earliest meeting, since it was very important to cast light upon the meaning of the resurrection which had been accomplished, and to show all that had been gained for the Church, as well as for the

Saviour Himself in that great victory. Hence I cannot agree with those who have supposed that everything here narrated did not happen exactly, in point of chronology, as stated, but that some of the words or actions may have been connected with other meetings. I would not exclude the idea, that the evangelists may at times have grouped together kindred words and incidents, which belonged to different times and places. But there is nothing here to favour, much less to require, such a principle of interpretation; and it is far more natural and beautiful, that once for all, and in the very first interview, the Saviour should have done and spoken all that brought out and illustrated the essential meaning and value of His rising from the dead.

Believing, then, that we have here Christ's own great sermon or commentary on His own resurrection, I shall consider myself as (and for this end may Divine help be granted!) called upon to regard the words of the text from this point of view.

§ 1. I remark, then, *first*, that we are here taught that Christ's resurrection *is the pledge of peace to His people*. This second pledge of peace has in it something unusually significant. The Saviour was not satisfied with His first salutation. "He said to them again, Peace be unto you." Hence we may regard this as more than a salutation, as a solemn formula, intended to condense into the briefest and most pregnant utterance the whole lesson of the resurrection.

If it meant anything it meant peace. It was a renewal by Himself of the anthem sung at His birth: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." The resurrection

put the seal upon His whole work in its peace-giving character. He had died to make peace between heaven and earth by a true atonement, through the shedding of His blood ; and now His resurrection proves that His offering has been accepted. God, as the God of peace, had brought again from the dead this great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Now the returning Saviour could speak of forgiveness as a reality, could impart it to His disciples, and could send them over the world to announce it to others. He had also laid down His life to open a channel for the effusion of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was to be sent as the messenger of peace, as the great Comforter, the fountain of all purity, life, and peace. Now, then, the Saviour having gone away had come again with this blessing in His hand, with this breath of peace upon His lips ; and to breathe the Holy Ghost, into them, and to breathe peace, was one and the same thing. Whatever there was in Christ's work, now finished, of peace and rest for the weary and heavy laden souls of men, *that* the resurrection guaranteed ; for His grave in its emptiness became full, and spoke all accomplished, all secured ; and around these gathered the halo of a peace and a serenity, such as man had never known since he fell away from God, and such as no meaner Sacrifice than that of the cross, no feebler energy than that of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, could have restored ! The Master comes back to the disciples with new claims and new attractions, as now made perfect through sufferings, their Redeemer from sin and sorrow, and from all the unrest, which these had created in their

guilty breasts. If these should again assail them, the memory of that divine countenance, as it shone in all the brightness of that resurrection-eve, fresh with Sabbatic calm and mantling with the glow of victory, should give them peace. Sin was atoned for, hell conquered, death beneath His feet. Greater was He that was *with* them, that was *in* them, than all that was in the world ; and " though in the world they should have tribulation, in Him they should have peace." They were to overflow with it, to radiate it forth like sunlight all around on the waves of human trouble ; and they were not to cease till from the gloomiest hills of darkness, struck at length by the far-off shining of this resurrection glory, there came back the strain : " How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth ! "

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that Christ's resurrection is the *authorisation of the gospel ministry*. " As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." There is here a strain of dignity truly divine. The Son places Himself on the same level with the Father. The one had sent with full and absolute authority ; and so now does the other. What warranted Jesus in assuming this lofty tone ? Was it not the resurrection, whereby He was declared to be the Son of God with power, and all His past claims to equality with the Father were confirmed and rendered unchallengeable ? It will not suffice to say, with Baur, that all that is required is not the actual resurrection of Jesus, but His belief or the belief of the apostles in His resurrection. This is to make error and truth

in their working equal, upon the authority of a teacher, or upon the working of any great religious system. This would have been a great stumbling-block in the way of the disciples of Plato, had they given out that their master expected his own resurrection, and actually rose, while this was a delusion. But Plato was only a philosopher, while Jesus claimed to be a messenger sent from God, with the resurrection as the seal of His mission. If Jesus, then, had been only a philosopher, however wise and enlightened, He could not have claimed any higher authority, such as to teach, that He was the Son of God, that His death was a sacrifice for sins, that He would be raised to rule the world and would come again to judge it. He could not lie down in the grave and remain there, and yet men go forth in His name to maintain all this, and to maintain that He had risen to prove it, without a contradiction to all our ideas of truth and reason. Nothing would be left but to take down the disciples of such a teacher to the ordinary level of human reasoners, discredited by the great mistake they had made at the beginning, and to leave them to rescue what they could, of his doctrines, or theirs. A rationalist may thus cast over the apostles, and make what he can of the relics of their teaching ; but we who believe in the resurrection see that Jesus could not do otherwise than claim authority, and transmit it to His followers. This accordingly is here done ; and in connection with the first resurrection appearance, which conclusively shows that rationalism is not the first Christianity. The apostles went forth not as the disciples of an eminent Jewish Rabbi, who anticipated the wisdom of a coming age, but as the

witnesses and messengers of the risen Son of God. They went forth to teach in His name, and to demand credit on the ground of all the wisdom which convinced them, including their own deepest experiences, that He was the Son of the living God and had the words of eternal life. Of this mighty evidence the resurrection was the crowning stroke ; and they went forth the heralds of One who had visibly all power given to Him in heaven and on earth. They did not propound a speculation, though they could reason too with philosophers who encountered them. But essentially they delivered a message in the name of the risen One, and on the ground of His rising. Thus Peter on the day of Pentecost—" This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus which was crucified, both Lord and Christ." Exactly so, Paul at Athens—" God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent : because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained ; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Such was the commission which the apostles received from their Lord, handed to them as He passed from the tomb to the seat of judgment ; and thus they discharged it as they went abroad, evoking a Yea, or a Nay, from every hearer, and binding over each to meet the word thus spoken, that should judge him in the last day. Thus, not otherwise, was a ministry founded, a gospel preached, a Church gathered around a divine and infallible Head. But now, with the disappearance of the apostles, has the gospel ministry lost its

standing and its authority? Or has its authority shifted to another foundation, removed now from the basis of the resurrection and the personal reign of a living Saviour, and indifferent to the whole alternative, whether the author of the doctrine be alive or dead? This cannot for a moment be granted. If the resurrection of Jesus be a fact capable of proof and apprehension by the human soul, then is it a fact for all time, whether published by an apostle or any other by whom His testimony is continued. If Christ be risen to reign and watch over the propagation of His doctrine, so that it is received or rejected as under His own eye, then does this give a solemnity to the publishing of it, which clothes it with an authority beyond that of any ordinary matter of human study. If His very words be handed down, and He continue to raise up a succession of men who proclaim them in His name, and if they be capable of transmission and identification from age to age, then other generations are brought equally near the divine messenger and the contents of His testimony. All this would be true, if it were the power of God only, that thus spoke in the resurrection miracle, the love and righteousness that gave the Saviour to die, the wisdom that thus fathomed man's need and met it,—the glorious life that before the resurrection revealed divinity, and renewed itself from the grave in the same moral splendour. These things speak, along with the wonder of resurrection power, to hearts and consciences, which are as capable as ever of appreciating them after the lapse of centuries. Nay, centuries are now filled with fresh and kindred marvels as to the new moral world which this great gospel has created, and with

the voices of millions telling what it has done for their souls. It is to this mass of evidence, linking the human heart and conscience to God, and all centred in "Jesus and the Resurrection," that the gospel appeals for its verification, and the Christian ministry for its authority. It needs no prolonged infallibility of teachers lengthened out, so as to add to the words of the apostles or to interpret them; for they assert their own completeness and supply their own interpretation, and if dark would need to be ever explained anew. It needs no chain of personal succession from the apostles, for the succession of persons is harder to prove than the continuity of doctrines; and could the one vouch for the other, any more than the golden head of the image vouched for the iron and miry clay? It is enough that apostolic doctrines are "committed to faithful men who are able to teach others also;" and thus the doctrine of Christ, retaining its heavenly identity, retains its heavenly authority, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Never shall the pulpit descend from this pre-eminence. Let it abide beneath the shadow of the cross and the resurrection, and it is invincible! Let it sound forth the words of Him who died and rose again, and then will He make its pleadings His own, fulfilling the promise, "Them that honour me I will honour!" Then will He eternally renew this first commission which grasps all ages in one—"As my Father hath sent Me even so send I you!" "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!"

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that Christ's resurrection is the *unsealing of spiritual influence*. Why did Jesus now "breathe upon his disciples, and say unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Was not this premature, and an anticipation of the great work of Pentecost? On the contrary, brethren, I know nothing more striking and significant, and nothing more visibly well-timed than this act in the first ever-memorable interview. It was natural that this great conqueror, who had broken through the ranks of the enemy, and by the offering of blood, opened a way to the well of Bethlehem, should bring forth from that hitherto inaccessible fountain something for the refreshment, the consolation, and the inspiration of those for whom its fuller draughts were intended. Till now all spiritual influence in the world had been by sufferance, a supply drawn on credit, and wanting the freeness and fulness of that which is of right and equity. The dark barrier of sin unatoned for closed up the outlet of the divine beneficence, and left grace to trickle forth only in drops and streamlets, rather than in a full and rushing tide. But now Christ had put that barrier away. He had rolled it aside with the superincumbent stone on his grave that seemed to entomb all man's hopes and imprison all God's gifts. Where there had been reconciliation there might be communion, there might be divinest effusion and energy of spiritual influence; and the risen Saviour, victorious and crowned, might scatter at His will the priceless blessings which were the purchase of His blood! Methinks, too, He returns Himself from the grave in the plenitude of the Spirit, as if a new baptism had overshadowed Him, for He "is put to death in the flesh, but quickened by

the Spirit ;" and now, as if eager to inaugurate a new reign of spiritual life and power, He puts His own resurrection Spirit upon His followers, breathes on them, and says unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Here was the token of greater things to come—the faint rustle, prophetic of the Pentecostal whirlwind! It marked out the Spirit distinct from Jesus, and yet breathed forth from Him, and traceable to Him, while harmonious with Him, even as the breath obeys the will. Beautiful was the emblem, as the disciples must have afterwards understood this breath to be, soft as the zephyr, but pervading as the air, and resistless as the blast; the breath of life, the breath of flame, the breath of purity and love and peace. Never was a more gracious symbol, while at the same time all bespoke that mystery and viewless energy whereby the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, is the chosen emblem of the Spirit! What did the disciples not owe to that breath of Jesus, a breath as from the fields of Paradise, wafted with His returning Spirit to this region of stagnation and spiritual death! Look for its effects in their after life! This inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding, so that they know all things written in the book of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning their Lord. It fills them with a heroic courage ready to breathe out their souls in martyrdom! It sheds over their souls a purity and a tenderness, gentle as the air which distils in dew and rain upon the grass, while at the same time it catches them up on the wings of zeal, and bears them over all the earth in rushing and resistless impulse! Look also for its effects in their writings, which justly we call inspired—or God-breathed. What

a pervading afflatus do we not see rest upon them, so that they are all full of Christ and His Spirit, as if their authors did not so much live as Christ lived in them! What histories, what doctrines, what prophecies! What lofty views, profound arguments, soul-stirring appeals and exhortations; making them constant witnesses of a higher than mortal origin, and showing that they all proceed out of Christ's mouth, who thus by His Spirit speaks to the Churches! It is said that the heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth; so here we have in these Scriptures of the apostles a new firmament created by a higher Spirit and peopled with more glorious lights and constellations, the lights and constellations of unerring and saving truth, shining as in a dark world till the day break and the shadows flee away! I need not speak of outward signs, miracles and tongues, by which the Holy Ghost attested His presence and wrought His will! Rather is it for our consolation that when these, with inspiration like a breath that had exhaled all its odours, passed away, there still survived in long and ever-widening undulations, the ordinary and saving influences of the Holy Ghost, moving upon the moral chaos, agitating it to its lowest depths of sin and misery, and by a mysterious potent spell, denied to every other agency, making all things new. Wherever, in far-scattered lands and widely-parted ages, the true Church of Christ has existed in souls renewed and born from heaven, these have all been owing to this breath of the Lord; all holy character, all happy experience, all that has been in the true sense fair, and lovely, and God-like—we should deny our

Christianity if we did not contend that these are the resurrection-gifts of the One Saviour and Lord, who, for this cause, crowns His ministers and servants with fresh bestowments of His Spirit. We hear this sound in long succession, as the breath plays around an Augustine, a Bernard, a Wycliffe, a Luther, a Bunyan, a Wesley, an Edwards, and a Chalmers! The quickening breath speaks its origin; it is the breath of resurrection, through new vehicles in song or sermon, and in new outbursts—whispers of anxiety, sighs of penitence, aspirations of hope, groanings of prayer which cannot be uttered! There is mystery and sovereignty, but there is fervour, and purity, and peace, the spring-time of a new life, a life breathed forth by the ever-living Christ into the soul which reflects His own, and stamps its impress on all the features of the living, and even leaves its parting touch on the faces of the dead! O who would not long and pray for such a visitation of this all-transforming, all-subduing, all-ennobling power! Who would not turn into passionate supplication the language of his creed “I believe in the Holy Ghost!” and looking abroad on all the dark and death-bound regions which the resurrection steps of Jesus have yet to visit, and His resurrection breath has yet to kindle, exclaim, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!”

§ 4. I remark, *fourthly* and lastly, that the resurrection of Christ is *the investiture of His Church with absolving and condemning power*. It was not without deep significance that these words of the Lord Jesus were spoken to His disciples in the fulness of His resurrection-glory and prerogative. “Whose soever

sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." For Christ died in conflict with sin ; went down to the grave as the sin-bearer, laden with that accursed load ; and now, having left it in the tomb, he comes forth to proclaim to the children of guilt and woe, not only the possibility, but the certainty, of pardon, and sends abroad his messengers to publish, with unerring clearness and unfaltering authority, the terms of mercy. For this, the Spirit that He had breathed upon them should be at once the qualification and the voucher, and whatsoever they thus "bound on earth should be bound in heaven." Not that he set up any priestly caste, raised above their fellow-disciples in His Church, armed with so-called sacramental power to forgive sins, in anything at all approaching the sense in which God forgives them, or wielding the tremendous prerogative of opening or shutting heaven upon them by their sentence. That be far from the mild and loving Son of God in the softened majesty of His resurrection-triumph ! That were no Easter news to a guilty world, that each man lies in his dungeon of condemnation till the voice of a fellow-mortal pronounce his absolution ! Anything here involving full and direct representation of God, would be an encroachment upon the rights of God, who alone in the true and absolute sense can forgive sins ; nor would this be other than an unavailing profession, since, without contrition and repentance, no sins are in the sight of God forgiven, and of contrition and repentance all men are at the best uncertain judges. Hence those who seem to hold, that all sins forgiven at the confessional are blotted out, dare not stand in any availing sense to

this claim of power—which would be equivalent to declaring a bankrupt solvent, while there were no means of searching into his books ; or of pronouncing a patient finally whole, while the physician was ignorant of the state of his vital organs. Not such an ordinance as this could He mean to set up in His Church, who is the Truth ; and hence we do not find His apostles in the subsequent exercise of administrative power, bringing individuals before them, and saying to one, “I absolve thee of thy trespasses,” and to another, “I leave all thy sins upon thee.” Is it credible, that if this had been Christ’s aim we should not have met the fulfilment in the dealing of the apostles with individuals, as such full and absolute forgiveness had already repeatedly appeared in the ministry of their Lord ? The power of forgiving sins, here conveyed, was not, and could not be, such power based upon omniscience in reading the heart, as Christ had used. It was a power connected with their sending in His name, and consequently with their teaching of His truth. It was the power of declaring infallibly and authoritatively, that there was forgiveness with God through the Son of His love, and of holding forth that forgiveness as His free gift, and making it over to every one, no matter how guilty and stained with sin, who should repent and believe ; while, at the same time, every unbeliever was pronounced unpardoned, and, while he remained in unbelief, the wrath of God was declared to abide upon him. Here, brethren, was a reality, and not a form or a dangerous error ; a forgiveness actually brought nigh, and in Christ’s name made over to the penitent hearer of the apostolic word ; while, as the counterpart, the doom of condemnation was fastened

upon the unbeliever's conscience. It was not, on the other hand, a merely declarative power of forgiveness that was theirs ; but, when supported by the Spirit that Christ breathed upon them, it was effectual and operative. Sinners were actually forgiven through their word, as they would never otherwise have been, and as they always were, when faith accompanied it. As they proclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," multitudes had their sin actually taken away ; and when this word was, so to speak, incorporated in the Sacraments, which they also administered, it had, through faith, the same effect ; and believing sinners, in these, sealed their pardon, and "arose and were baptized and washed away their sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus." Such was Christ's grand ordinance for the pardon of sin, the sounding abroad of the apostolic message in word and sacrament, "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord," and the actual coming of these times of refreshing, when, God having raised up His Son, sent Him, as it were again, in the presence of His messengers and in the energy of His Spirit, to bless men in turning them from their iniquities. These were apostolic powers ; and such in spirit are still lodged in the Church of Jesus Christ. It does not need the permanence of the apostolic office, as distinguished from the Christian ministry, and raised above it by the gift of inspiration, to secure what Christ in His wisdom and love intended ; nay, there is a deep and blessed sense, in which the work begun by apostles, is carried on in the publishing and conveying of pardon by every true member of

the Church of Christ. The whole work, and worship, and testimony of the Christian Church is the publishing anew of a full and a free salvation. "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come.'" This proclamation which belongs to all Christians ought to find its loudest voice in the Christian ministry, "that repentance and remission of sins may be preached in Christ's name among all nations." So long as the same terms of pardon are promulgated and carried home to the sin-stricken heart and conscience, by the grace of the same Almighty Spirit, so long is the word of the gospel messenger a word of forgiving and absolving power. He attacks the worst evil and deepest malady of our fallen nature, the sense of guilt, without the cure of which nothing can be cured; and behold it gives place before him, and the dark and dismal record is cancelled, and the handwriting that bound over to the second death is taken out of the way and nailed to the cross. Blessed be He that has given such power unto men; who has put into their hands a message so glorious and cheering, that it cannot be believed without awakening the hope and the sense of pardon; that its presence in the soul is incompatible with remorse and guilty despair; and that no man can truly receive it, and the living Christ with it, without starting up, disburdened and unloosed, to run a new career of thanks and praise to Him that loved him, and that washed him from his sins in His own blood! To none of the children of men is such a power given as unto him, who, in publishing Christ's forgiveness, is the medium of conveying it, and thus saves a soul from death and hides the multitude of its sins. Though we maintain the transcendent place of the

Master here, there is a sense in which the one may be said to forgive sins even as the other ; and to the one as to the other the words may be reverently applied :

“ He speaks, and listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive ;
The mournful broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.”

O that all the ministers of Christ were thrilled with a sense of this power, the true power of the keys which Christ has annexed to their office, a power through their faith and that of their hearers, to shut hell and open heaven, and that they more confidently expected its exercise, when their word goes forth in their Master's name !

O that they stood up more joyfully and hopefully amidst the children of sin and wrath gathered around them, and proclaimed their heavenly message fresh from the Saviour's lips, “ Believe and live ! Dismiss your fears ; the Lord is risen.” “ He was delivered for your offences, and raised again for your justification.” “ This blood of the covenant was shed for remission of sins unto many.” It “ cleanseth from all sin.” “ He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” God grant that even now, while our poor human tongue speaks, a voice divine may whisper in the ear of many a previously unpardoned sinner, the word “ Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,” “ Daughter be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.” “ I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sin.” “ Though thy sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red

like crimson, they shall be as wool!" But know this, that if thou believest not in Him who died and rose again, thy condemnation abideth. Thou mayest banish thy sins from thy thoughts; but in thy deepest heart they are retained. Thou mayest sink into the very mire of sin, but thou sinkest not below conscience, below remorse, below the grasp of Christ's truth. Thou mayest welcome every heresy to exclude the sense of guilt, yea, welcome atheism as the only hope of ending without condemnation. But this word of God incarnate still holdeth thee fast. "Thy sins are retained!" And when thou diest, though thou die in total insensibility, thy sins live, thy judge is the Living One, and His threatening thou must abide, "The word that I have spoken the same shall judge him at the last day!" O why should a living and rational soul need remonstrance in such a case? Why should any one carry with him into the future, this awful treasure of darkness, sin retained, sin unpardoned, sin unconquered, sin which he himself chooses to invest anew, when Christ is seeking to end it, with a fresh and aggravated power of enthrallment and destruction? "Whoso findeth me, findeth Life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death!"

The gloom and sadness, with which unbelief overcasts the future, supply Christians with a fresh argument for humble thankfulness. "Because Christ lives, ye shall live also." Your life may be feeble; for it is still the life of childhood; but still it is resurrection life like His own; and if you are planted in the likeness of His death, you are also in the likeness

of His resurrection. It has the pledge of growth ; it has the promise of manhood ; it has the germ of immortality. You are in truth greater than you know ; and this new-born existence to which you have been begotten by Christ's word, and of which the forgiveness of sins is the first inheritance, shall yet bear you amidst scenes of glory and joy, where sin shall be no more, where death shall be swallowed up in victory, and where through ages and cycles "without number numberless," Christ shall breathe upon you a new and ever-rising inspiration of blessedness, and fill you with all the fulness of God. O that we could live as the children of such privileges, as the expectants of such beatitudes ! O that our existence were one prolonged thanksgiving to Him who died to ransom us, and rose to crown us, and lives to exalt us to His own eternal throne ! Then should we rise to sit with Him in heavenly places, and be prepared for those great scenes in the ages to come, wherein God His Father and our Father, His God and our God, shall show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus !—*Amen.*

VI

CHRIST, THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.”—MAL. iv. 2.

THESE words form almost the last note of Old Testament prophecy. There was to be a long pause of about four hundred years in the utterances of inspiration—a pause that was not to be broken till the Messiah's advent. We read on one page of our Bibles, of Elijah coming before the Great Day. We turn the leaf and read of John the Baptist appearing in the spirit and power of Elias ; and we too readily forget the great interval, as great almost as since the invention of printing, or the overthrow of the Greek Empire, and only a year more than since the discovery of America.¹ During this extended period the Jewish Church was to suffer great vicissitude and depression of fortune. Their ancient independence, never thoroughly recovered from the Persian and the Greek, was at length to be swallowed up in the Roman Empire. Their old religion, brought back in some measure of unity and purity from Babylon, was to be divided into the sects of the Pharisees

¹ First written 1863. Transcribed 1892.

and Sadducees, and to be corrupted by the traditions of the one and the unbelief of the other, till the prophets of other days would hardly have recognised their own faith. The very hope of a Messiah was to be perverted ; and instead of a meek and lowly Saviour, a worldly conqueror and sovereign was to be expected by a blinded people. Errors in faith were to be accompanied by declension in morals, and the true Church was to languish under the weight of formalism and hypocrisy by which it was to be oppressed. Such is the picture of the times of the Messiah, drawn as is generally believed in the third chapter of this prophetic book ; where we see the Messenger of the Covenant come to an unprepared temple, and appear as a swift witness, against the defections of a people who falsely trusted in their covenant with God. Nevertheless the picture should have its light as well as its shade, and should not wholly consist of worthless materials ready to be burned up in the day of God. There should be a remnant, according to the election of grace, consisting of those who feared the Lord, and spake often one to another, and destined not to be consumed by the fires of divine judgment, but to be preserved and gathered in as the jewels of God, out of the rubbish of a false profession. For this true Israel—this Israel within Israel—the prophet by anticipation wrote, and having commended the book of Moses as their guide in the dark or twilight period that stretched before them, he at the same time announces that this period should end, and that the Messiah himself should bring the long-expected day. Such is the connection and import of the sublime prophecy of the text ; the last, and perhaps the most splendid,

oracle of the Messiah, in the whole Old Testament Scriptures: "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings." Were I to adhere to the textual view of these words, I should be shut up to consider what Christ's coming was to those who already had some true light, to those who already feared God, and thought upon His name; and thus I should have mainly to set forth the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. But I shall make no apology for giving to this title "Sun of Righteousness" a wider application, and for considering not so much Christ's rising then and there upon Jewish cloudiness and dimness, as rather His arising from first to last upon the total darkness of our fallen world. In thus discoursing from this text, may His grace assist me in speaking *first* of Christ's *light*, and *secondly* of Christ's *healing*; in other words, of His enlightening power, and of His healing influence.

I. Let me then first endeavour to explain the nature of Christ's *light*, as that is expressed in the sublime title given to Him, "The Sun of Righteousness." The title is so glorious that every attempt fully to disclose its meaning must come far short of the reality. But I shall seek to bring out the leading truths which it conveys. I begin then with that peculiarity of this light, which is intended to be specially marked in calling this sun the Sun of *Righteousness*.

§ 1. I therefore, *first*, observe that this light is *saving* light. In many parts of the Old Testament, "righteousness" is used in nearly the same sense with "salvation." Thus in Isaiah (xlii. 13), "I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry"; "My salvation

shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished" (Is. li. 6). So also in the Psalms, as in xcvi. 2, "The Lord hath made known His salvation; His righteousness hath He openly showed in the sight of the heathen." And again in Micah (vii. 7-9), "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my *salvation*. . . . He will bring me forth to the light; and I shall behold His *righteousness*." We should not then greatly err were we to translate "Sun of Righteousness" by "Sun of Salvation," only bearing in mind that, along with this idea of salvation, there is always the idea of the way in which salvation is procured for guilty and miserable sinners, by the righteousness of one who satisfies the law of God, and who recovers the transgressors to harmony with that law and its righteous demands. This salvation of God, then, a salvation resting on the perfect righteousness of God's own Son as the sinner's substitute, applied to believers in Him for justification, and in its gracious operation, terminated and completed by their willing return to personal righteousness and holiness of life—this is what is here meant under the name of "righteousness," and the Messiah as the Author and Revealer of this glorious deliverance is the "Sun of Righteousness." It is a title parallel to that given Him in Jeremiah (xxiii. 6), "The Lord our Righteousness," or parallel to the great prophecy in Dan. ix. 24, that "He should finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness." We speak in our own language of the "sun of freedom" rising upon a country, or of the "sunshine of peace" revisiting it. But the light which here bursts upon a lost and guilty world is the saving light of righteous-

ness. It announces to the condemned the hope of pardon, and shows the way ; and it discloses with equal clearness the means of deliverance from the power and bondage of corruption. All lies in Christ, whose righteousness so magnifies the law that a world of transgressors may find in Him acceptance and justification, and whose Spirit has such power to reveal the truth regarding this righteousness, as to make the believing sinner, through faith in it, inwardly righteous, as Christ Himself is righteous. The way of salvation, before dark and undiscoverable, now lies in sunlight. No longer does the question need to be asked, "How shall man be just with God?" for the answer is ready, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." No longer does that other lamentable question need to be proposed, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" for the reply is equally at hand, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The whole consequences of the fall are retrieved ; and the demerit and unrighteousness wherewith it cursed the race of man are swept away. "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so does grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." In Him the whole salvation is contained, even as the sun reveals himself. In Him, the guilty are righteous in law ; in Him, and as subdued by His Spirit who works in them, they are righteous in fact. Righteousness is brought near. Salvation does not tarry. The long and dreary night of unrighteousness is ended. The outer gloom of perdition is escaped. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

§ 2. I observe, *secondly*, that it is designed by the figure of the text to teach us that the light that is in Christ is *original* light. The light of the sun is *unborrowed*. It is a mystery which our science has not yet solved, how this fountain is fed. But relatively to all sources of light which we know, it is higher and self-sustained. Now, this images the nature of Christ's light, in contrast with all the knowledge of divine things which comes to us from other quarters. It would be wrong, indeed, to say that all that is contained in the revelation which Christ makes is new. Much of His word consists of history known before, though less accurately, through other channels. Much of it consists of morality, which is only a more perfect edition of the law written on the heart. Much of it consists of doctrine in regard to God and His Providence, which may be known and ought to be known (though, alas ! this knowledge has always been sadly defective) from the light of nature. If Christ's revelation were entirely new, it would not suit us, any more than a cure would suit a patient, that did not proceed upon the known principles of his bodily constitution ; or a form of government would suit a people, that went in the face of their known history and national peculiarities and exigencies. But as a remedy might be truly new, though adapted to the old disease, and a form of government truly original, though providing for recognised wants and tendencies, so the gospel of Christ, though it proceeds upon the law and the light of nature, is in its grand characteristic arrangements an entire novelty. The very fact that God should be disposed to mediation, and should Himself have provided a Mediator, is

itself a novelty which could not have been anticipated, and could not have been discovered had Christ not revealed it. Shut the Bible, and what light have you on this question? "God," you exclaim, "will surely not leave His creatures to perish." Why not, if they have sinned against Him and deserve it? He has thus left the fallen angels; and if you say that this is only proved from the Bible, then let me ask you to look around you and within you, and see how far this world and yourself as a part of it have been left already, and then to put the question to yourselves, if you can give any reason, why a God, who has thus left his creatures so far, may not, for their own fault (for *that* is always supposed), leave them for ever? Take away Christ's Word, and where is your certainty? Is it not, therefore, like light in darkness, when Christ comes forth to say, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save that which is lost"? And where is one of the saving provisions of His Gospel to be learned except from Himself? Where else do you find salvation by sacrifice? Or, if even the heathen have their altars and their victims, where else is "the Lamb for a burnt-offering"? The disease of guilt is felt everywhere; but Christ alone reveals the remedy. The incarnation of God's own Son, that He might be at once the priest and the sacrifice—the obedience of His life, the agony of His death, the transfer of His merits to all who are willing to embrace them; the operation of His Spirit to make them willing by the constraint of love, and by the same principle to prepare them for heaven, is not all this a truly wonderful, and we may well say, an original method of salvation, which

only God could have carried out and revealed, and which Christ carries out and reveals, because He is God? It may be that you see no beauty or excellency in it. But even you must admit that it is original. You may prefer taking your stand upon God's mercy without any reference to Christ, or upon your own good works and repentance, without any reliance upon His scheme of blood-bought pardon and imputed righteousness. But while you reject, it is not given you to degrade, this heavenly system. Your very rejection of it is a testimony in its favour. It is too strange, too peculiar, too remote from your taste and fancy. But do you not see that, in the same proportion, it is too far above the thoughts of all fallen creatures, and thus bears the stamp of its celestial birth? O that you were enlightened to receive those things which are freely given of God! O that the glory of this scheme of saving mercy burst upon you, as it does upon the hearts of those who believe, for then, you would adore, with all saints, this wisdom of God in a mystery, and celebrate in strains of surpassing thankfulness, the incomparable love of Him who had first created this new world of grace, and then in opening your eyes to behold it, "translated you out of darkness into marvellous light"!

§ 3. In the *third* place, I am led to remark that the light that is in Christ is *pre-eminent* light. Were we asked what was the most glorious object in all nature, we should, with one consent, reply, the sun! We should re-echo the language of our great poet, "Thou sun, of this great world, both eye and soul!" Familiar as the wonder is, the broad, bright orb of the great luminary cannot be seen, lifting itself,

amidst a widespread radiance out of the bosom of the sea, or pouring its dazzling flood from the mid-day sky, or sinking in tender and softened majesty behind wood or mountain, without a sense of admiration mixed with something like awe such as no other natural spectacle creates. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars!" But what would our feelings have been, had we lived before in a sunless world, our life one lengthened night, or a night only relieved by the glimmer of the taper or the flash of the meteor, groping in perplexity and cowering with fear, if all at once the day-spring from on high had visited us, and with breathless astonishment, enrapturement, and almost worship we had seen him mount the heavenly highway and cast over all things a splendour wholly new! The unparalleled revelation would not only forbid but abolish all contrast. We should say and feel "This alone is light! All before was but darkness!" Similar to this, but far more glorious, is the impression of Christ's pre-eminence on the minds of all His people as the light of the moral and spiritual world! "He is alone, and of the people there is none with Him." The ancient world had its lights, we grant—its poets, philosophers, moralists, lawgivers. But what were they in regard to righteousness or salvation? How much did they diffuse of "the light of life"? Tell me, ye worshippers of nature and reason, of so much as one soul that was ever thus fully illuminated, yea, of one soul that ever truly knew its own darkness, till Christ came and revealed that darkness in the light of day! Gather together all the wise men of Athens, and do they not by their own confession,

walk in darkness, for amidst their schools of philosophy, and even their temples, there stands this altar, "To the unknown God!" Here is the midnight taper making the darkness visible! Turn now to the sunrise on the mountains of Judæa, and behold the beams of living light, "God is a Spirit! God is light! God is love! God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son! I am the way, and the truth, and the life! He that hath seen me hath seen the Father!" The world, indeed, in its blindness did not see the sunburst; but heavenly attendants heralded it; and their "Glory to God in the highest!" was the song of dawn! But Christ was not only pre-eminent above heathen sages, who by wisdom knew not God, but also above Jewish prophets, who had known and revealed God to men. They were but secondary lights fed by Christ's yet undisclosed fulness—lamps shining in a dark place, stars twinkling till the break of day! Their use was to point to Him, to be some faint image of His glory, to guide a pilgrim Church over a waste but not trackless wilderness to their home in the skies. But, when Christ came, they vanished, having no more glory, no more place, or, if seen for a moment, seen only like Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration in Christ's light, and then leaving Jesus alone, shining like the sun in his strength. It is needless to assert Christ's pre-eminence over His own apostles and ministers and people. They are so far from disputing it, that they delight to celebrate it. The language of each is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" Each has seen on the way, like Paul, a light above the brightness of the sun, and that light has blinded every organ and ex-

tinguished every impression but its own. Like the fabled monument which responded in song to the beams of sunrise, the universal Church, dumb to every other solicitation, breaks out when struck by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness into ardent thanksgiving, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!"

§ 4. I remark, *fourthly*, that Christ is a *universal* light.

What a universal blessing is sunshine! It streams into the palace and the cottage window. It lightens the step of age, and adds gladness to the laugh of childhood. It brightens all work, and enlivens all recreation. It cheers the sick man upon his pallet, and the prisoner in his cell. It is the common element of all our joys, the soother of our griefs, the nurse of our hopes "able to drive all sadness but despair." Wide as the over-arching heaven it reaches, relieving the tedium of the wilderness and the monotony of the sea, and acting as a mighty spring—felt even when unseen—to all the works, toils, and conquests of human labour. Unequal in its bounties to the climes of earth, to none is it denied, and for all colours, conditions, and tribes of men, it has its glances and its smile, like tokens from heaven. What an emblem of the Higher Light which is not less universal, though, for reasons which we cannot fathom, it is still beneath the horizon in many a wide region of the earth! Where it has shone, can the natural sun be more unrestricted and free? Say not, that Christ shines only for the elect, and that none other have any interest in His blessed beams!

No, brethren, God be praised for it, you do not need to solve this question whether or not you belong to the elect, ere you are warranted to look up and rejoice in His light. He shines for you as men, for every one of you, and to all, His great words go forth, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Are you a sinner? Then for you He shines, for "He came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." Are you lost? Then for you He shines, for the "Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Are you in darkness and in death? Then for you He shines, for this is, so to speak, the voice of His shining, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light." In vain will you search His Word for any appeal to any limited class to come to Him. His calls are universal: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." "Whosoever will, let him come." "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Believe these appeals, and you shall be saved; for you have as much reason to believe them as any of the elect now in heaven. They believed and were enlightened, and Christ's light is as free to you, as near to you, as intentionally and as graciously made to stream down upon you, as it was upon them. The door is strait, but it is open, the way is narrow, but it is a public highway, and the very sun that lights up both with its ample flood, seems to look down with sadness upon the many that turn away from a heaven and a glory thus set before them. To all eternity it will be true, that in every gospel region, the Sun of Righteousness shone as truly and as intentionally as

the natural sun for all, and though men do not believe, their unbelief will not make this truth of God of none effect ; and what is now true of only a part of the earth's surface shall yet be true of the whole, that its vast unbounded circuit has lain under the beams of the same glorious Sun of Salvation, and the entire race of man been shown the way to glory, honour, and immortality ! O the generosity of God to a world of fallen creatures, not one of whom has a claim to anything but to be left in outer darkness ! The wonder is, that some lurid and terrible meteor did not burst forth to freeze us into despair with the sign of universal judgment. But behold the Sun of Righteousness breaking through the shades of death, and guiding our feet into the way of peace !

II. Having thus spoken of Christ's light, as the Sun of Righteousness, I now speak of Christ's *healing*. The Sun is here described as rising with healing in His wings. It is not necessary to raise here the question whether the prophet in his bold fancy conceived of the sun as a bird, and its rays as wings, or whether he knew and copied the designs of the Egyptians and perhaps other ancient nations, who figured the sun with wings. It is enough that by these wings, we know he means the rays or the influence of the sun ; and of that influence, as a healing influence, I shall now speak, remarking in passing, that in addition to the influence of light, we are now to take into account that of heat, of which, too, the sun is the centre. Let me only barely notice the beautiful part of the verse which follows, where the Jewish Church is represented as exulting in the new-found warmth, as the imprisoned cattle leap forth at the breath of spring. In considering

the healing influence of Christ's light and heat, I shall follow the simplest of all divisions, showing how Christ's healing power is felt on *Sin*, on *Sorrow*, and on *Death*.

§ 1. Let me speak, then, *first* of Christ's healing power in relation to *Sin*. Light will not overcome sin ; for is not all sin more or less committed against light, and are not some of the worst sinners men who have been educated not only in all the obligations of morality, but in all the truths of Christ's blessed Gospel itself? But let heat be added to light, let there be a sense of Christ's amazing love to guilty men, and then what a change takes place, as when the heat of the summer solstice is added to the light of the winter, and the whole face of nature is made new ! Show me a sinner glowing with love to Christ for the mercies of His great salvation, and I defy you to keep that man under the power of sin, any more than you can hold the rivers frost-bound in a thaw, or retain the blades of grass hoar and shrivelled when the sun is up and the spring abroad. " I believe in Christ," does any one say, " and I love Him. His cross is my hope, His death is my ransom, His blood my priceless treasure ; but I am a drunkard, a thief, a liar, a false swearer, a worshipper of mammon, a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God. I love Christ, because this enables me to love sin, and to continue in sin that grace may abound ! " " Unhappy wretch," does not the indignant Church and even the affronted world exclaim, " renounce a name that you profane ! Debase not the love of Christ by claiming it for your impure bosom ; for it is written as with sunbeams, that a lover of Christ is a lover of righteousness, and that whoso has hope in

Him is pure as He is pure !” Wonderful this power of the love of Christ, not only to make man better towards his brother, as even the world bears witness, but to make him a new creature towards his God ! The hard and stony heart that will not soften under all God’s judgments, but though broken, remains flinty still, every fragment a separate flint, melts under this sunshine of love. The prodigal returns and wanders no more ; and the very root of disobedience, the distrust and enmity against God, receives its deathblow. What is wanted, brethren, to moralise this whole community ? Only one thing, the love of Christ in every man’s heart. Sum up all the crimes that are tried at all the assizes. Would not this wipe out the whole black calendar ? Or go into private life, and collect the thousand nameless injuries, indignities, discomforts, for which the law has no remedy, would not this universal solvent dispose of them all ? Or take all the offences of pride, impiety, blasphemy, stubborn defiance against God, which form after all the blackest entries in the judgment-book of our sins, where would one of them be if this healing sunshine of Christ’s love had full play upon our fallen natures ? What a glorious simplicity and yet what a divine efficacy in this one principle of cure ! I often wonder what those mean who speak of keeping amongst us the holy law and the holy love of God as our Father, and yet giving up the cross and the blood of Christ. This is to take away the sun and yet look for the summer, and then at the end of the dull sunless months to go forth with triumphant step to gather in the fruits of tree and field, rich and ripe as ever. From such miserable dreamers, if they are not something worse, may God

preserve our Church and people ; otherwise, soon will all goodness, all sacredness, all heaven-born righteousness, robbed of its vital heat, become rottenness and dust, and our moral and spiritual harvest be turned into an heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow ! Let but the darkness of unbelief deepen, and what loathsome and abominable things will creep abroad ! The black eclipse will show again its ring of fire, and when heaven falls, the moralities of earth will be shattered in irretrievable overthrow ! O may the love of Christ guard us from such a fate, and shine on—the vanquisher of night, the restorer of chaos, the healing balm of time, the pledge and preparation of immortality !

§ 2. I observe, *secondly*, that Christ's healing extends to *sorrow*. This follows from the healing of sin. Every sin has its own sorrow, its remorse, its injuries to mind and heart, and often also to body and estate. Nor is the sorrow confined to one, for many sins are (so to speak) plural sins with plural sorrows ; and even where sin is singular, like a ball wounding many in its career, it rushes onward, dragging with it fresh sinners and fresh sufferers. Who can tell how prolific sin is of sorrow (for is not all sorrow the fruit of the first sin ?), so that if you can stop the course of sin, you stop the hydra-headed growth of sorrow. Let the gospel stop the career of a murderer, and it saves all the anguish to his victims, and their connections, all the shame to his own, all the remorse to himself. Let it stop the career of an adulterer, and what a manifold fountain of sorrow is healed ! Let it stop the career of a slave-driver, and the sorrows of a whole plantation

and himself, the worst slave of all, are ended. Let it stop the career of a tyrant, and the groans of a whole people and his own, most lamentable of all, are hushed. These are but samples of the healing power of the gospel upon human woes ; and when all sin is prevented, how is the vast accumulation of poverty, disease, pain, disgrace, remorse, with the endless sorrows of despair, diminished ! Nay, it would be swept utterly away but for past sins, and even for these in their sorrowful fruits, the gospel has a cure. It shakes off the eternal pangs of repentance ; and from the temporal consequences which can no more be arrested, it draws forth the materials of a wholesome discipline, so that in a wonderful cycle, sorrow, the fruit of sin, is made to heal sin, and the affliction of this life works out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Is there anything more admirable than this action of the gospel upon sorrow, abolishing so much, and using what remains for remedial purposes, so that as the sun dries up the marsh and turns it into the meadow, and yet retains so much of its old moisture as is needed to drop down on it the softening shower, so this higher sun heals our worst griefs, and yet exhales from our ills and miseries the elements of purification that come down on our hearts to subdue them into tenderness, and to evoke all the fruits of sympathy and love ? O my Christian hearers, what might have been your griefs, horrors, agonies, at this day, had not Christ dried up the bitter waters of your sin ! And what might not your hearts have been, too, but for the healing influence of tribulation, and the seed-time of tears which has ended in joy ! Will you not extend this great remedy to a sinful

and hence a sorrowful world, and bring every sufferer within its range, that walking with you with this sunshine overhead, they may return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and may obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing may flee away!

§ 3. *Thirdly* and lastly, look to the healing influence of Christ's sunshine upon *death*. The natural sun lights all generations to their grave. He looks upon the earth, as it circles round him, a moving sepulchre, where animated dust is every moment relapsing into its inanimate form. He fixes the hour of dissolution and is not averse to the spectacle, for from one death only did he withdraw his head. He can gleam with fiery eye when the tornado is wrecking the vessel, dart the lightnings of pestilence on the devoted city, or muster with red portent the contending legions to the carnival of death. His light which cheers the living, falls lurid and ghastly on the faces of the dead, and his only favour to them is a greener mantle to wrap their grave. Long as he shines his rays work no revival, but rather eat out the names and scatter the monuments on the forgotten dead! Alas for us did no higher sun possess the sky! "If in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable!" But now is Christ risen—risen from the dead—risen with healing in His wings for all that sleep in Him! His are beams that penetrate the coffin—that open the marble, that shine into the recesses of the sea, and kindle to immortality all whose flesh doth rest in hope. The sunshine has quickened, purified, transfigured their spirits, and shall it leave in darkness and corruption the not less redeemed and sacred

bodies that once enshrined them? No, light is sown for the righteous, is sown broadcast over all the fields of death; and at the predestined period, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, this light shall spring forth speedily, and the whole vast congregation of the righteous dead shall start at the beam of the Sun of Righteousness, and mount upward under His outspread wings, not lost in the blaze but looking forth, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners!" O the glory of that victory over death, the last enemy, which the light of Christ's immortal countenance shall then achieve! O the blessedness of those who shall then awake and sing, the healing of all the wounds of that last enemy! O the joy of being for ever with that Light of Light, who has fashioned their vile body that it might be like His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself! Dear brethren, let this comfort us concerning them that are asleep; and let us also, "who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body!"

In conclusion, brethren, are we enlightened, warmed, vivified by this heavenly Sun? It is mournful that many who may be in light should be in darkness, most mournful of all, that gospel hearers should be so, over whom, outwardly, the Sun of Righteousness has long risen. This Sun will one day set. To Christians, indeed, to believers, to all that fear God's name, He will shine on, and shine more gloriously; but to many a gospel hearer, alas, too, to many a communicant, He will set, and set for

ever. Then no more healing of sin, no more healing of sorrow, no more healing of death. The night, so long threatened, so long disregarded, has come, and oh what a night is that—

“O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day!”

God grant that that terrible sunset of hope and joy may never, through our own fault and sin, overtake us! To all the solemn warning is equally given; “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk in the light while ye have it, lest darkness come upon you.”—*Amen.*

VII

PAUL'S WITNESS FOR CHRIST BEFORE AGRIPPA

“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”—ACTS xxvi. 29.

IT has never been possible long to keep Christianity at the bottom of the social scale, and to exile it from all companionship with the great of the earth. If they have not welcomed it into their halls and palaces as a friend, it has come unasked as an intruder, and disturbed their peace. A principle, so powerful as to be able to turn the world upside down, must reach the top not less than the bottom of the social scale, and put the whole mass in unexpected motion. This peculiarity, like every other in the gospel, was reflected in the life of its Divine Founder, who began his work in the more obscure synagogues of Galilee ; but could not end it ere he had stood before Pontius Pilate, and Herod, and the rulers of the Jews. In this respect it was appointed that the disciple should be as his Lord ; and Paul, who had commenced his ministry as a Christian in the synagogues of Damascus and in the deserts of

Arabia, was not permitted to close it ere he had been brought into contact with Roman procurators and Jewish kings, and even called before the tribunal of Cæsar. The parallel held not only in respect of outward situation, but of personal deportment in that situation ; and He, who had witnessed a good confession before the highest of His human judges, now strengthened His servant to walk honourably in His steps. Christianity never looked greater than when thus put on its defence before the greatest ; and every word, spoken by its inspired advocate, turned to it for a testimony. Every person of the slightest sensibility must have been impressed by the commanding appearance of Paul before Festus and Agrippa, and not least by his different treatment of these persons. Festus, as the more superficial and uninstructed hearer, is less earnestly dealt with on any special ground of what he held in common with the apostle, and his rude interruption, " Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad ! " is met with the manly, defensive protest, " I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness ! " Whereas towards Agrippa, as the more instructed of the two, and as one who still made a profession of faith in Judaism, all the resources of aggressive eloquence are brought into requisition ; and especially the appeal is directed to him as a partaker of his own Jewish faith, " King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets ? I know that thou believest." Agrippa might not have answered at all. But he is moved so far as to reply, " Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." This answer of Agrippa has been differently construed ; and he has been, till recently, supposed to confess that a

great impression had been made upon him, so as to leave him already all but a Christian. Hence our authorised version makes Paul reply, as if he took this for granted, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." In the revised version, however, the matter assumes a different look, for the answer of Agrippa is much less favourable, as if he were complaining of Paul as making him a Christian too easily, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian;" and then the revised version makes Paul's rejoinder correspond, "I would to God that whether with little persuasion or with much, not only thou, but also all those that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds."

It is not necessary to go into much balancing of evidence as to this critical question. If Paul's rejoinder had stood alone, I should have been still disposed to adhere to the old view of the situation; for it certainly looks more favourable to the idea that some impression had been made on Agrippa, than that he complained of being taken up too shortly. But, on the other hand, it must be admitted that the translation of Agrippa's answer to Paul, as it is found in the revised form, rests largely upon a change in the reading of the original, which is given on the best authority. Agrippa no longer says, "Thou art persuading me to *be* a Christian." But what he says is this, "Thou art persuading to *make me* a Christian;" and this is hardly compatible with deep and real impression. The words of Agrippa, if this reading be preferred, can hardly mean anything but this, "You are making short

work of my conversion." There is still room for the supposition, that Paul thought Agrippa to be more impressed than he was willing to admit; and that he framed his rejoinder accordingly. But, looking at the whole position in the light of recent critical discussion, I think that the evidence for Agrippa's being seriously impressed, is much smaller than it was once supposed to be; and also that we cannot confidently say that Paul dealt with him as more impressed than he was willing to confess. I am thus left to handle this subject, on the supposition that Agrippa probably made a cold and almost a sarcastic reply to the apostle. But inasmuch as this is not quite certain, it is allowable to glance at the other views that may still be argued for; all the more that the lofty and generous strain of the apostle, which is the main thing in the text, remains the same on every supposition.

In farther discoursing, then, from this text, I have to consider Paul as an example to all Christians, in respect of the right mode of arguing for Christianity. He exhibits, and so should we, *Christian faith in its repose*, and *Christian love in its struggle*. May the Spirit of God enable us rightly to set forth these positions.

I. I seek, then, to turn your attention to the apostle as an example of one who, in arguing with others for Christianity, is an example of *the repose of Christian faith*. We may say here, probably as summing up the grounds of his faith and of his rest in it, that he was *satisfied with its evidences*, and *satisfied with its experiences*.

§ 1. We say, then, *first*, that Paul had rest in his faith, *because of its evidences*. Whatever might be

the state of Agrippa, or of Festus, in regard to Christianity—almost-persuasion or non-persuasion, or all that lay between, Paul had got entirely beyond that negative region. He was as fully persuaded as he could be of anything that Christianity was true and divine. He could say with the rest of the apostles, “We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ the Son of the living God.” Paul could also find his faith strengthened by the fact that he had once strongly believed the opposite. He could look upon Festus and Agrippa and all before him, and think that it was as possible for them to be converted as for himself. Was not, then, this vision of Christ, and the mighty change that accompanied it, a good evidence to Paul that the gospel was divine? If Claverhouse, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Covenanters, had met with something on the way, that made him a Covenanter himself, and also, ever afterward, a monument of meekness and humility, would it not have been a good evidence to others, and also to himself, of the new faith? It would have been almost as great an evidence of sincerity on the part of Claverhouse, and he would have had that qualification of a witness; but would he have had equal qualification with the apostle on the side of intelligence? When Paul attested that Christ had appeared and spoken to him, leaving him also blind, who among men that were then living could have been so intelligent a witness? Suppose that any of our modern rationalists had met him with their vision theory, and tried to convince him that it was mere hallucination, would they have made any impression? And as Paul tells us that he afterwards wrought a great many miracles himself, and wrought

them ere he stood before Agrippa, and as these writers admit, that he claims, in his epistles to the Corinthians and Romans, to have done so ; which now ought Paul to have believed—his own eyes and ears, or our critics of the nineteenth century ? Paul had a vast mass of other evidence for his faith. He had found in Christ the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophets. He had seen the mighty changes wrought on the characters and lives of men by the gospel. It had brought heaven into his own soul ; and he, in the new life that was growing within him, had already grasped the prize of his high calling, the resurrection of the dead. How could he fail to be satisfied with grounds like these ? or how could he shrink from witnessing to all men, small and great ? So is it with every Christian ; and the more of a Christian he is, the more does this witness of the Spirit deepen within his soul. He is not seeking truth ; he has found it. He does not say, “ I am inclined to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world ” ; “ I am persuaded, on the whole, that the Gospel is divine ” ; “ On striking the balance of probabilities, I cast in my lot with Christianity as the gift of God to man.” The weakest Christian on the face of the earth would not deliberately adopt this as the language of his testimony. His faith may be assailed by doubts ; but that no more reduces it to a matter of probabilities or a calculation of chances, than clouds and darkness change the nature of light. It is light in its first faint glimmer as in its meridian blaze. All Christians do not pass through the same process as the apostle Paul, or receive light from the same kind of evidences. Many begin from a point farther

back, not acknowledging the divine origin of Moses and the prophets, but, it may be, only gradually receiving them as the Word of God. Many are more predisposed towards the gospel by its own inward character, and less by the mighty signs and wonders that wait on its steps. None receive such awful demonstration as its first followers did from the opened heaven! But amidst all these diversities, which attest the manifold working of the Spirit, there is the same unity of result. Every Christian is as much satisfied as Paul was that the gospel is true. Every Christian sees the finger of God in it, as heaven's own remedy for a world sunk in sin and death. Every Christian gives a place unlike all other outward facts, to the signs that attended the Saviour's birth and death and resurrection. Every Christian can say, "Christ speaks in this revelation to my heart and conscience, and I bow and adore!" "I know that the Son of God is come and hath given me an understanding that I may know Him that is true." "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see." This, Christian brethren, is the language of one and all of us in testifying concerning our faith to the world around us. It is, alas! far inferior in strength to what it ought to be, and is sadly compromised by our defects of life. But faith, wherever it is real, has only one voice, and it is this, "There is divinity in this gospel and we have seen and felt it. We have not seen the outward wonders; but they are unaltered by time, and as they convinced Paul and his brethren they convince us too! We have seen the gospel itself, and it is too great, too holy, too loving and good, to have come from any other source than from the bosom of God.

In this faith we live, in this, God helping us, we shall die ; and so solid is our persuasion of this, that truth must first become error ; and reason, madness, ere we who have believed and entered into this rest can, while the evidence is still before us, be rationally disturbed and shaken in our faith."

§ 2. In Paul we have an example of a Christian pleader, satisfied with his faith, on *the ground of its experience*. No doubt evidence and experience run into each other ; but they are so distinct that they may also be considered separately. And in Paul the force of this additional ground was manifest. He had not embraced the gospel without making trial of any other system. Nor had he only recently come to his new convictions. Nor had he passed through nothing of trial to put them to the test. In all these respects, his experience was of the weightiest character, and gave him force as a pleader. He could stand up before Agrippa and say, " Here I am, not only a Christian, but a proselyte from your faith—which was also mine—to Christianity. I know how you recoil from it ; but if you will try it, as I have, you will find the difference, for it will be the most blessed day in your whole existence !" He could also say, " My experience is not of yesterday. The first excitement is long over—my zeal has stood the test of time ! Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." And he could add, pointing to the manacles that restrained the full eloquence of his gesture, " Behold at once in these the outward reward of my Christianity, and the proof of the inward happiness it has brought me ! It can be no earthly temptation that binds me to the gospel ! I must have some joy that counterweighs this chain !

But though a prisoner, I not only endure it, but rejoice in it. I am ready to be bound ; I am ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus ! ” How impressive an appeal to the experience of the Christian as confirming all the other evidences that give stability to his faith ! And though all Christians do not witness after exactly the same manner, are they not equally supported by the working of their religion on their own minds ? They can all tell, like the apostle, of a blessed transformation, a turning from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God ! They can all tell of forgiveness of sins, obtained by faith ; perhaps, too, after it had long been sought by the righteousness of the law, and sought in vain. They can all tell of sanctification by faith in the crucified Saviour, a faith which brings Him near, and which purifies the heart, even as He is pure. They can all tell of the cheering hope of an inheritance among the sanctified, a hope of which His death is the foundation, His resurrection the seal, and by which the shadow of death is turned into the morning ! Take the Christian at his worst outwardly, and he will bear the same testimony to his religion. Let him be persecuted, imprisoned and manacled ; and he will still say, and say in the midst of coldness and of scorn, “ I would that all of you were within even as I am, whatever I may be without. My religion may have set the world against me, but it has given me peace with God ! It may have consigned me to a dungeon, but it has delivered my soul from hell ! It may have ranked me with the filth and off-scouring of all things, but it has cleansed my soul from the stains of sin, and reserved for me to be clothed in white raiment, and to have

my name enrolled in the Book of Life!" This is the sublime property of faith to be its own light in the greatest darkness, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ to which it has attained! The Christian has thus the witness in himself. If asked for the monument of his faith he can look within: "By the grace of God, I am what I am; and the grace which has been bestowed on me has not been in vain! For, what should I have been at this day without the gospel, what a blank my life, what a wreck my character, what a shadow my memories of time, what a gloomy foreboding my outlook into eternity!" What is there, brethren, of which men will speak with the unbounded complacency with which they speak of their choice of Christ and His gospel, and of their experience of that Saviour, who is its sum and its substance? There is an enthusiasm in youth; but this increases with age. There is a romance in glowing anticipations of the unknown; but this grows with sober certainty and deepening knowledge. There is a vaunting of self-sufficiency, inflated by the fulness of prosperity; but this Christian boasting supports the weight of trouble, and swells under the pressure of a chain! Lazarus can look up to Dives at his sumptuous table and say, "Would thou wert as I am!" while, perhaps, Dives is inwardly ejaculating, "Would that I were a dog! would that I had never been born!" Surely this is a divine seal on Christianity that not one of its disciples ever complained of the power of his faith to make him happy, while the confessions and lamentations of others are endless, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit! We are fallen upon an age of pessimism, which

groans itself out in our culture, our fine literature, and even in our philosophy ; not mere sentimentalism, but genuine misery and emptiness confessed, and not far off from suicide. Whence the contrast between this and the still militant, jubilant, triumphant spirit of Christianity ! We are thankful for these dolorous utterances, as an honest unveiling of the wasteness and desolation of the human spirit without the Infinite. But O, how much more should we rejoice by the circle being completed, and by these stricken ones coming round to the healing and eternal life which are in the only true God and in Jesus Christ whom He hath sent ! But you tell me, that the Christian too complains, and that even this apostle complains, "O wretched man that I am !" But is this a complaint in the same sense ? It is not from any despair of his religion ; for he straightway adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not really then a complaint of his religion that we find in the Christian, but a complaint against himself, that having so divine a principle of recovery, his wounds are, through his own fault, so slowly healed. But the Christian does not therefore disparage this remedy or discourage its universal use. The very Christians, who have complained most loudly of their own defects, have been the most fervent in their thanksgivings to God for this priceless remedy, and the most earnest in their appeals to others to lay hold of its unutterable saving virtues. Does this seem to you a contradiction ? Then make the experiment ; change your cold, and cynical, and it may be despairing, attitude towards Christ's gospel, for one of faith and acceptance ; and then you will find that the more you are dissatisfied

with yourself, the more are you satisfied with your Saviour, nay more, that in the very working of humility there is a blessedness which all the world may well be asked to share! Everyway faith is satisfied; with the quality, though not yet with the degree, of its experiences. Everywhere it has life; and its only desire is to have it more abundantly!

II. Having thus spoken of Paul's utterance as that of Christian faith in its repose, we have now to speak of it as that of Christian love in its struggle. The two graces are together; and each works in its own way; faith towards rest, but love towards struggle and aspiration. To what, then, are these struggles and longings of the apostle directed? His words tell us, that he longs *for complete brotherhood in the faith of others with himself; for universal brotherhood; and for divine assistance* to effect these ends.

§ 1. Love in the Christian heart *struggles towards complete brotherhood*. The whole of Paul's speech proves this. It was not only a defence, but an appeal. Hence the pointed apostrophe to Agrippa, when that to Festus seemed to have failed: "King Agrippa, believest *thou* the prophets? I know that thou believest." Here was one point that Paul and he had in common; and Paul rejoiced in it. Agrippa had not only to all appearance maintained conformity to Jewish worship, but had taken an interest in religious questions. Paul mentions this in strong language in the outset of his discourse: "I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews." All through he is addressing Agrippa: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with *you*, that God should raise the dead?" (v. 8); "At mid-day, O king" (v. 13); "The king

knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely" (v. 26). Agrippa had listened, and had not interrupted. Perhaps Paul saw traces of interest which encouraged him to hope; perhaps, as I have already stated, he was more impressed than he was willing to allow. And even if his cold and repellent utterance, as it is now more generally accepted, "You are making my conversion to this Christian sect go on too fast," disappointed the apostle, it did not extinguish his love, or his belief in the possibility of the king's conversion with God, to whom all things are possible. "Still I long for it," he says, "whether it come quickly or slowly, whether after much more effort or little." How beautiful is the answer, thus construed; while at the same time it suggests the unspeakable sadness that was in the apostle's heart! He had longed for more, unspeakably more; and now this interview at least seems to have failed; and there is a wide and painful distance between the hated Christian sect and the Jewish king. The very points of contact to which Paul had appealed, and appealed in vain, only aggravated the failure. Here was one who had in him Jewish blood (since though the descendant of Herod, he was also, through Mariamne, sprung from the old stock of the Maccabees), yet cut off from all Israel's dearest hopes—a reader of the prophets, but not a believer in them—one who could be appealed to as admitting a resurrection, yet averse to Him whose death and rising alone gave life and immortality! It was for Paul a sorrowful end of that day's meeting, for the barrier which he had sought to break down was still unremoved—the hand he had thought to clasp in brotherhood, cold and closed as ever! Nothing was

left but still to love, to make one last pleading, to offer one prayer—doubtless not the last—to Him who could help and save ! This, brethren, ought to be our example, where we fail to meet with a welcome for our Saviour Christ, and find only cold and unsympathising words. We may thus fail with our own countrymen as Paul with his. We may fail with those who profess with us a belief in the same Bible, and in the same prophets, in the same God, and in the same immortality ! We may fail with those who are expert in all questions of theology, but who refuse to come to the practical questions of faith and repentance. And whereas Agrippa objected to be a Christian, because that hated name was so new, there are those in our day who object to it, that it is so old and outworn ; and who will have nothing to do with it, except as reduced and emptied of all its saving meaning, so as to be a mere echo of human reason, wandering alike from Paul and from his Master. How sad is it thus to be severed from the sympathy we longed for, and from the fellowship and blessedness of those who cast a whole eternity away ! Still we are to love them, to plead with them as we may, and to pray to Him, who alone is able, to make us at last truly one in Christ Jesus ! Nor are we to be satisfied, brethren, with great impressions made by the gospel of Christ, until by true conversion the brotherhood be complete and established. Paul would not have been satisfied, though Agrippa had been persuaded ever so much, so as to be almost a Christian, as the words have been taken to mean, if he had not become one altogether ! How much of this, alas ! is still in our day an “almost” Christianity, that does not stand the test, which is followed by

doubt and halting, by reserves and hesitations, by scruples and exceptions in taking up the cross, which lead us to fear that the conversion was only an "almost one," and that our congratulations over the entrance of the soul into the kingdom have come too early! In view of facts like these, equally sad with coldness and scorn, what is wanted but a divine work of conviction of sin, such as the Holy Spirit alone can carry through—such a sense of the suitableness of the provisions of Christ's salvation, as shall lead to a decisive embracing of them; and, above all, such a discovery of the surpassing glory of the Redeemer Himself, as shall reach the very depths of the heart, and make the last shades of indecision flee away! How happy should all be in such a consummation, Christians of older date, in fresh victories of the truth, and triumphs of the Saviour, and those newly born of God, in the light of a new sky, in the sympathies of a new companionship, in the certainties of a new inheritance! Why, then, should this happiness not be more frequent? Why should Christian love be ever on the wing, and not at last be permitted to alight on those who, once strangers and foreigners, had become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"?

§ 2. We see here, *secondly*, that love in the Christian pleader longs and struggles after *universal Christian happiness*. It would, no doubt, have been a great result to Paul, had Agrippa been completely gained over to faith in Christ. But that would never have contented the large-hearted apostle. His sympathies overflowed upon that crowded audience, and he longed to see them all "fellow-heirs, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel." The

Roman Emperor Caligula, a contemporary of Paul, was so cruel that he wished that the Roman people had only one neck, that he might despatch them by a single blow. But here is Paul wishing that all men had only a single heart, and that a heart like his own filled with the love of the Saviour. Here was the Spirit of Him who died to "gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad;" and who had uttered the great words, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink," "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christian fellowship is thus no narrow, selfish, and exclusive principle. It is essentially expansive and diffusive, and the wider the circle it embraces, the more does its own heart glow with delight and thankfulness. The Christian has something to communicate which is needed by all, which is suited to all, and which is sufficient for all; and therefore with apostolic large-heartedness he can say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Mark also how the apostle wished his hearers to share only the brighter part of his experiences, but to escape his trials and afflictions for Christ's sake. Thus does Christian love desire for others, along with the best blessings of eternity, the lightest measure of the earthly cross which infinite wisdom can grant; and while aware that in the world there must for all them who live godly be tribulation, choose rather to bear this in its own body, than to impose it on those who are pleaded with, to become Christian brethren! The Christian will stand in the attitude of a cross-bearer towards

the weak and feeble, enduring all things for their sakes, that they may be made partakers of the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory. Like this noble-hearted apostle, even when met with indifference and scorn, he will say, "Come with us, and we will do you good, even at the expense of bonds and fetters! The bonds and fetters be unto us; the fullest liberty of soul and body be unto you! Come with us, and we will bear your burdens! Come with us, and we will soothe your sorrows! Come with us, and you shall not complain of the weariness of life, of the solitude of affliction, of the selfishness of hearts alive to their own distresses and dead to yours! Happy in God, happiest of all in Him, you shall be happy also in the sympathies of your brethren! The universal Church shall forget its own wants in labouring for yours; and its arms, fettered as they are, shall be extended to embrace you and shield you from evil!" Such is the pulse of apostolic love which still beats in the Church of Christ, feebly we admit, alas how feebly! but the vital warmth of love is there, and there is not a miserable and outcast child of Adam, whether he stand farther from Christ or more near, whether he be a king or a beggar, whether he be an open reviler or an almost believer, to whom the living Church is not ready to say, "Would that thou wert a Christian indeed, and a Christian without bonds! Would that thou wert a Christian, and the happiest Christian among us, thy sins pardoned, thy heart healed, thy life peaceful, thy death blessed!" This is what the Church is saying all over the world, testifying it to all men small and great—to the gilded misery of palaces, and to the squalid misery of hovels; to the expert and subtle Agrippas, who see in

Christianity, with all its darkness, something that their distance from can be measured by reason ; and to the dull and stolid Festuses, to whom the whole question is monomania ; and to all the grades of ignorance and wretchedness that lie between ! This the Church is saying to all tribes and tongues of men by its thousand agencies, by the voice of its members, the pleadings of its ministers, the tears of its missionaries, the blood of its martyrs ; and its line is going forth into all the earth, and its words to the ends of the world, " Here in Christ is true blessedness ! Come drink, and live for ever ! Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ! Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ! " O that the Church could say this with the power of God ! O that she could say it with such earnestness, such consistency, and such affection as to be believed ! For then her own blessedness would overflow, and fill all the place, and souls that have been till now parched and desert, as the waste howling wilderness, would become as " a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon ! "

§ 3. In the *third* and last place, let us remark that Christian love *longs and struggles for divine help to fulfil its wishes*. The apostle, in the sight of that great company, as he speaks, looks upward. He lifts his manacled hands to heaven, " I would to God." This is not a strong formula of asseveration, " God knows how much I wish it ! " It is more, " O may God Himself grant it ! " It is thus the language of supplication ; and we see how faith and love here, as always, culminate in prayer. These graces, which came down from heaven, are continually re-ascending to it—faith, to trace up its own blessedness to this

source, and love to unseal that fountain for the blessing of others. Well might Paul pray. It was worth praying for, for it was the richest gift of God Himself; that which Christ brought down from heaven—the return of God to the soul—the return of the soul to rest in God for ever! It was necessary to be prayed for; and this the apostle well knew; for no human arm could accomplish it, and the warmest wishes of all the apostles on earth, had these wishes not risen to prayers, would have effected nothing! It would not be prayed for in vain; for on a larger or smaller scale, according to faith, God would crown the aspirations of Christian benevolence and open hearts to the influx of Christian blessedness! And yet it is probable, it is indeed certain that Paul was not roused up to prayer by these considerations, however important, and however precious, but rather by the irresistible impulse of Christian love and sympathy, to which prayer is the instinctive resource, and which cannot express itself but in prayer. Why do we need arguments to pray? Why do we need motives to pray? Why do we need disquisitions, theories, justifications of prayer? It is because we do not love—because we do not feel the irrepressible yearning to make all men as happy in Christ as ourselves. Does the man need arguments to pray, who stands helpless on the shore, amidst the darkness and storm where a brother is struggling in the agonies of shipwreck? Does the man need arguments to pray, who bends over the pale form of a beloved wife or infant, oppressed by some deadly disease? No. Love here wrings its hands in prayer without any stimulus; and in its agony “prays more earnestly.” It is enough that prayer is not forbidden. Were it forbidden, it

would still struggle against the check ; whence we see that if we do not pray for the salvation and blessedness of all around us, it is because we do not love them—because we have no sympathy with their danger—no sense of their capacity of rescue at God's hands, and no overwhelming desire that He would rescue them from eternal woes, and crown them with the blessedness of His great salvation ! Were our Christian love what it ought to be, our perceptions of men's state, our feelings towards them, our utterances in their presence, would all be tinged with the colours of prayer. The thought of God's salvation, as what above all things they needed, would so fill our hearts, that it would tremble over upon our tongues, and ere we were aware, they and we would be carried upward to the throne of God in the breathings and aspirations of Christian solicitude ! O for this apostolic spirit in our dealings with unconverted and unsaved men ; that our heart might be ever melted with their case, and our eye ever turned to Him who alone can relieve it ; that we gave them to know our deepest longings in making them known to God ; and that our whole life were thus one continued and effectual prayer—an appeal to men to be happy—couched in a deeper appeal to God, who in return would make them so in Christ and for Christ's sake, exceeding abundantly above all that our poor mortal love could ask or think !

Christian brethren, what thanks and praise do we not owe to God, if we are at this day, to any degree, found in the same circumstances with the apostle, and able to look inward upon an experience for the present and forward to a hope for the future, which we would not exchange for all that earth can give

or take away ! We may not have so much of this as we desire—very much less than the apostle had—less than some of our brethren, who are better enabled to comply with the precept, “ Rejoice evermore ! ” Still, if we can with sincerity take our place at the communion table, we are “ the blessed of the Lord ; ” the seed of all true joy is sown within us, and we can look down upon all the possessors of thrones and kingdoms, and of all the materials of worldly grandeur and luxury as beneath our feet ! We may be tried with the sorrows of life ; we may be oppressed with daily toil ; we may be disquieted with the vicissitudes and disappointments of a world where man is born to trouble ; we may be exhausted with sickness and slowly sinking to the grave ! It matters not, our conscience is clear, our peace secured, our inheritance fair and bright in a land which knows no cloud or sorrow ; and all things are ours, for Christ is ours, Christ is within us the hope of glory ! O what do we not owe for such a portion, bestowed on creatures so unworthy, and confirmed and sealed by a Saviour’s blood ! Can we ever express our obligations to His dying love ? Can we too warmly take up the exclamation of this same grateful apostle, “ Thanks be unto God, for His unspeakable gift ! ”

But we would see our happiness diffused. We would not selfishly monopolise it, or hide it from perishing and dying myriads around. There is no reason why any of you should not be as happy as the apostle Paul ; and were he among you, he would beseech you one and all to share his joys ! One day, there will be a fixed line drawn between the Church and the world, but that line is not drawn yet. Those

who are to-day rejoicing in the Saviour, were yesterday miserable as you are, and asking the same question, "O who will show us any good?" Take you the same path, and you will reach the same end! Enter by the same door, which is Christ; and you will find yourself in the same mansion, where the table is spread, and the guests anointed, and all is lighted up with a Father's love! I would to God that none remained in outer darkness! I would to God that all who hear me this day believed and entered in! Then our joy would be full; and Heaven would rejoice with us over those who "were dead, but are now alive again, and over those who were lost, but are now found!"—*Amen.*

VIII

THE MYSTERY AND THE GLORY OF REDEMPTION

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”—ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

THE whole Bible is but an expansion of one sentence, one utterance of the Eternal, “I am Jehovah.” Hence the revelation must be incomplete ; for a God who could fully reveal Himself to His creatures would be no God ; and it must also be astonishing and amazing ; for a professed record of any part of God’s thoughts and ways that did not land in mystery and tend to wonder, would be self-condemned, and proved to be neither true nor divine. It is not only here and there, that God’s thoughts and ways are super-human, but throughout, just as a circle is everywhere a circle, and nowhere a square, or capable of being reduced to the latter figure. How man can at all lay hold of God, or, with his finite and infinitely inferior mental faculties, frame any conception of Him, this is the wonder and has sometimes been the stumbling-block of philosophy ; and it is only

removed out of the way by devoutly and thankfully accepting the fact, that we do know Him (though darkly), and are so far made in His image, that there may be and ought to be reverential contact and communion with Him. This opening up of the mind of God to the mind of man, with the very assurance that, worms of the dust though we be, we are reading the thoughts and exploring the ways of the Creator, is at once the starting-point and the goal of all human knowledge, is the treasure of history, the consecration of science and philosophy, the inspiration and essence of religion natural and revealed, so that whoever cuts off this intercourse between God and man, through the manifestation of His very mind and heart to us, involves all things in darkness, and covers us with the shadow of death. But while God is not so above us, as to be utterly beyond us, rather through His condescension brought down and linked on to our finite existence, or, better still, pleased to link us on to Himself, so as to be around us and within us, the light of our day and the eye of our seeing, we must be constantly reminded that though brought near, we are not brought up to Him ; though companions, we are not equals ; and that while our line touches His, it cannot run parallel with it, as it sweeps in its own awful circle from eternity to eternity. The lesson is one of humility, but also of consolation ; for the depths of God's mind are depths of truth, of wisdom, and of love ; and therefore we may not only be cast down, but also lifted up, as we study together in this lofty chapter these great words : " For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

It is with a profound sense of my inability to do justice to this sublime topic, that I now, humbly depending on Divine grace for help, direct your attention to it. In order to give unity to the subject, I shall say nothing specially of the ways of God in Creation and in natural Providence ; but limit myself to Redemption, showing how in various departments, the ways of God are superhumanly mysterious and yet divinely glorious.

§ 1. I remark, then, *first*, that God's ways are not our ways nor His thoughts our thoughts in regard to the *need of redemption*. Take the entrance of sin into our world, and the continuance of sin in it, which occasioned the need of redemption. This is confessedly a great and staggering mystery. No doubt the difficulty may be evaded ; but then it is by giving up belief in God, or in the existence of sin altogether. If God be merely a blind physical force hardly distinct from the universe, or even if He be an intelligent but not a moral power ; then, against such a God, who is no true God, sin is impossible. Or if man be a being without conscience, or any capacity of choice that would make him responsible, then is he degraded into a being who cannot sin, but acts like the lower creatures. The same result would seem to follow, if we held with some, that sin was a necessary part of human education, and that man only comes to be capable of morality by disobedience, though how the sense of moral good and evil could be thus generated seems a contradiction. Setting aside all these errors, and starting with a true God, and with a creature capable of moral

action and made in His image, we feel how great is the mystery of the fall. Let us suppose that man—himself perfectly good—had been able to make a creature capable of standing or falling, would he have accepted the responsibility? Would he not have made that creature without that liability; and if he could not, would he not have sought to make no creature at all? This is the way in which an earthly philanthropist would have sought to act in such a case; and therefore in his hands sin would not enter at all. Hence the extreme difficulty of finding any reason, such as the human mind in the present state can take in, why at the hands of God, sin could find any entry. I have read many such theories, and considered them; but, to my mind, this one verse is more true and more philosophical than all of them put together: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." We are sure, on the one hand, that there is a God; we are equally sure, alas! that there is sin or moral evil in His universe. Hence there must be something here, which we call a mystery, something that we believe, as we believe in God, will one day be cleared up, without alienating from Him His moral attributes, by making Him either the author or accomplice of sin, on the one hand, or destroying His rule of the universe, on the other hand, by showing Him utterly unable to exclude it. We believe, I say, that here is a mystery; and it is our duty to confess it; and abide in faith that somehow, God's ways, at this point, are right and higher than ours, as the heavens are above the earth. Thus far, had we been only theists and not also Christians, we might have gone, waiting with the faith of natural

belief in God, for a vindication of this awful step, whereby evil has been permitted to come in and work its ravages, and to remain ever since and work them still. But there are in the gospel of Christ references to this subject, whereby, without clearing up its darkness, glimpses of light fall upon it, so that simple and naked faith in God is assisted. These glimpses of light do not warrant us to say, that evil was designedly introduced by God that He might glorify Himself in overcoming it, nor that sin was a necessary stepping-stone to redemption. Language like this aspires to a giddy height, where the finite mind cannot support itself; and where it mistakes its own reasonings and fancies for the thoughts of God. But the lessons of Scripture, while leaving the entrance of evil in its awful mystery, assist our faith by showing that our misgivings in regard to God, which thence arise, are groundless, and also that, however strange, yet as a matter of fact, evil can be overruled for good. See, first, how our doubts and misgivings in regard to the character of God, are here by His own word, repelled. Redemption shows us, that it could not be for want of power in God that sin entered, inasmuch as in Christ He defeats it. Nor could it be for want of righteousness, since the redemption in Christ is one continued death-blow to its dominion. So it could not be for want of wisdom in God, that sin burst in like a plague, as the wisdom that cures is more wonderful than that which might have excluded the disease. And, to crown all, it could not be from want of love; for in Christ, God gives to sinners the unspeakable gift of His love, and if He can love sinners, He could not from want of love have denied to the unfallen any-

thing needful for the vindication of His character. Thus the work of the second Adam casts back gleams of light upon the darkness that surrounds the trial of the first Adam. Calvary meets so far the vexing thoughts that rise from Eden ; and if the mystery remain, it loses something of its terror. And while it is thus true that the gospel shows God's character, in spite of the entrance of evil, to be still divine, our second thought also finds a place, that, by overruling evil for good, God can be made to appear in some respects more divine than before. There is an undoubted outburst of the glory of God on the darkened theatre of sin, although we dare not say that the theatre was darkened for the purpose. Something of this overruling of evil for good, we see even in the providential government of the world ; but it has become far more conspicuous on the field of human redemption. Attributes of God, like mercy, which could have had no place in dealing with the innocent, have been called forth in sparing and in saving the guilty ; and emotions of awe and gratitude have been awakened in the breasts of His creatures, which otherwise would have been inconceivable. Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded ; God has become more glorious in His dealings with sin for its expulsion ; saved sinners rise to be more blessed ; and angels are more instructed and confirmed. The thoughts of God, all through, have been unlike the thoughts of men ; but already there is some breaking in the cloud, which supports the hope, that, in the end, they will be found as much higher than ours as the heavens are above the earth.

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that God's ways are not

our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to the *purpose of redemption*. Man, as we learn from Scripture—the only source whence we can expect to know it—is not the only being who has fallen ; but man is the only being who is redeemed. There are those, who profess not to believe in Scripture, but who arraign this supposed procedure as unfair and unequal ; and there are those also who accept Scripture, and yet reject its apparently clear testimony, as to the exclusion of fallen angels from mercy. Both classes of objectors go upon the same principle that God cannot justly punish with a final sentence of rejection those who have sinned against Him, no matter how aggravated their offences may be ; but that in some way having given them being, He is bound to make that being ultimately good and happy. But this runs counter to the whole Bible doctrine of grace ; for on this footing, redemption is a clear debt ; and whether it be fallen angel or fallen man God is not entitled to withhold it. Men may stand in their views either upon justice or upon grace ; but they are not entitled to stand upon both ; and if they take their stand on mercy, then they must grant that it would have been perfectly righteous in God to have condemned all sinners. So far as the mystery lies in permitting sin and in reconciling this with God's justice, we have already considered it ; but now the mystery comes in of two sinning races, and of God's dealings with them, and different dealings, in the way of mercy. When we ask the reason of this difference, we find none. It is one of the deep things which belong to God, and in regard to which He giveth no account of His matters. It is an impressive display of what we

call *sovereignty*, that is, not arbitrariness, but the exercise of sovereign right for good though unrevealed reasons, where we can only wonder and adore. We might have supposed that the higher race would have been selected ; and that God would have glorified His mercy, on the still more conspicuous scene from which they had sought to cast themselves down. But had it been known that they had fallen, and fallen without hope, how difficult would it then have been to anticipate that another race would escape? Man does not forgive where he has been insulted as God was in his rebellion. Nations do not tolerate blows aimed at their independence and their very existence ; and therefore man's revolt might have been expected to draw down swift and remediless destruction. We justly exalt the fatherhood of God ; but this great and glorious truth must be harmonised with the rest of God's character, and with the conditions of the moral universe over which He presides. Sin in its very essence is a wilful attempt to dethrone, degrade, and even destroy God ; and even the relation of fatherhood, with its duties to other children, may warrant and even necessitate the penal separation of the child or children, who would conspire to act out in the family, what sin is in the universe. That God's thoughts should have been thoughts of peace, in such a crisis to a sinning world, is the wonder of unfallen beings and of those who are recovered. They cannot go back to that "counsel of peace," in which, though every foreseen trespass demanded the exercise of justice, mercy yet rejoiced against judgment, without exclaiming : "This is not the manner of man, O Lord God." "O the

depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out ! ”

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to the *plan of redemption*. How utterly unlike to any means of man's devising are those which God has chosen for the recovery of His lost creatures to His favour and His image ! That God's Son should become incarnate and die on the cross for the world's redemption ; that God's Spirit should descend into the guilty and polluted hearts of sinners, and work out there a blessed transformation ; and that all this should be effected by the free and sovereign grace of God Himself, and laid open to the very chief of sinners, as the unconditional gift of His love, this, as universal experience attests, is something so far from having entered into the heart of man, that it needs incessant effort to keep it before him, even after it has been once revealed. The world had four thousand years to learn the lesson. God had made the outline of it known to His Church from the beginning. He had raised up a special people to be the depositaries of the revelation ; and He had taught them by priests and prophets, by types and signs without number. And yet when redemption came, how few received it, how few understood it ; so that when the Saviour was actually hanging on the cross, and finishing the work given Him to do, it is questionable, if so much as one, even of His own disciples, comprehended the design, or saw the glory of His sacrifice. Man sees so little of the evil of sin, that he cannot understand why an infinite satisfaction is needed. His own heart is so narrow that

he cannot embrace the love of God in the gift of an infinite sacrifice. His benevolence is so contracted that he distrusts the offer of an unlimited pardon. To crown all, his moral perceptions are so blunted, that he is affronted rather than consoled by the promise of an Almighty Spirit, to work out his deliverance from the bondage of evil. Hence, when man is left to work his will upon the plan of redemption, he strikes out all its characteristic features. Away goes the Incarnation, and Christ is no more the co-equal Son of the Father, but the son of Joseph and Mary. Away goes the Atonement, and the Cross is no longer the means of reconciling God and sinners, but the testimony to a God from the first reconciled. Away goes the offer of pardon through a Saviour's blood ; and back comes the voice of the law, "Do this and live !" and as there is now no call for a divine Spirit to renew and sanctify, this last pillar of redemption falls amidst its other broken columns, and man's own effort and struggle return as the source of his repentance and reformation ! What is Socinianism ? What is Mohammedanism ? What is Judaism sunk from the level of Isaiah to the Talmud ? What, but so many testimonies, that God's ways in redemption are too high for the reason even of those who may be wise and highly esteemed in this world, and that it is easier to bring down heaven to earth, than to lift up earth to heaven ? All the opposition to evangelical religion with which we are surrounded, and which incessantly repeats, "Give us a Christianity that is rational ! Give us a Christianity that we can believe ! Give us a Christianity that meets, as everything else is doing, the advancement of the age !" What does it amount to

but this, "Give us a Christianity without God! Give us a Christianity without that element of grandeur, of mystery, of overwhelming superiority to man's thoughts and ways, which compels awe and humbles pride!" We accept the demand, come from what quarter it may, as an involuntary homage to the superhuman glory of the faith we stand by, as a tribute to the Christianity which still moves in her own orbit, and, though surrounded by cloud and darkness, refuses to leave her native heaven! Nor do we lose anything, but gain everything, by retaining the gospel at its original elevation. Pointing to Him, who is the Son of the Highest, we can say to the wandering children of men, "Here is God Himself come to seek and to save you!" Appealing to the matchless virtue of His sacrifice, we can turn, not to the whole who need no physician, but to the sick and sore-wounded, and testify "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him!" Taking our stand upon the completeness of His work, and the freeness of His salvation, we can ply the most distrustful and desponding with the overtures of His love, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." And when the pardoned sinner feels his utter weakness, blindness, worthlessness, and helplessness, then can we—standing by the fountain of spiritual influence which Christ has opened—invite all to be "washed and sanctified, as well as justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The grandeur of these provisions comes home, with a consoling and peace-giving as well as

purifying power to the sin-burdened conscience and heart! They reveal the majesty and strength, as well as the tenderness of the Godhead, and are thus the support and stay of dying men! Who has ever ventured his soul upon a human saviour, who needed first to venture his own, or said to any of the vanishing shapes of reason, "Be thou my guide through the valley of the shadow of death"? When the storm arises and the winds beat, and the heaving deep yawns restless to devour, think you that the dark beetling rock, as it lifts itself far above the spray of ocean, is anything but a confidence and a joy to the drowning mariner, if he can only cling to its solid breast, and, escaping from the foam below, rise by a sure pathway to the upper heaven! Even so is it with the Rock of Ages, as it rises heaven-soaring, and we with it, from amid the surge and wreck of our sin and misery; and it is because of its unearthly grandeur and elevation that it strikes the eye, and attracts the clinging embrace, and trembling yet hopeful footsteps, of those who were else lost for ever! Never can we surrender this Godlike greatness of the gospel or suffer this high stronghold to be dismantled and destroyed! It were to surrender our own soul's refuge, and that of all the guilty, and with a heaven above that stooped not to our rescue, and an earth beneath that crumbled to our tread, to sink unpitied in the waste of sin and ruin!

§ 4. I remark, *fourthly*, that God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts, in regard to the *progress of redemption*. Redemption has a history; and this is of all others the most difficult to scan, not only as it lies in the Bible, but in uninspired

records. It has been said, "Interpret the Bible as any other book ;" but though there is a certain truth in this, if we take it roundly it ultimately means, "Interpret God as you interpret man." You cannot even interpret Church history as you interpret any other history. It is in a sense, which belongs to no other history, the story of a battle not yet fought out, or of a campaign not yet ended ; and there are combatants at work beyond the range of human observation, and a supreme celestial leader, whose point of survey none can share. Take one of the great histories of the world, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. You ask when you have read it, "To what does the decline and fall of the Roman Empire tend?" It is not to the rise of Christianity, though much of the book is occupied with it, since with that end the writer unhappily has no sympathy ; and yet he has held forth no other, so that the book, wonderful as it is, is inorganic and has no centre. But to the Christian, the centre and guiding light of all history is the progress of the gospel ; and here comes in again our element of mystery ; here are our old anomalies and difficulties, while, at the same time, true to what we have found as to the substance of redemption, there is a lofty, all-pervading grandeur that speaks to the devout observer the presence and the hand of God. I shall illustrate this union of mystery and greatness in regard to *three* features in the progress of redemption—the *rate of its progress*, the *instruments of its progress*, and the *hindrances to its progress*.

(1) Take, *first*, the *rate* of the progress of redemption. I do not go back to the Old Testament dispensation ; in which redemption was indeed de-

veloped, in which sense there was progress, but comparatively little diffused, whatever difficulty this admission creates for us. I pass at once to the New Testament dispensation ; and then how strange and startling does it appear at first sight, that under a dispensation the law of which was expansion, and whose divine watchword was "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," this religion has, after nearly nineteen hundred years, when reckoned by statistics, now been carried only to a minority of the human race. And, not only so, but large regions have been lost to the gospel ; corruptions and depravations of the most lamentable nature, even where it has been professed, have widely and long prevailed ; and Christianity has not only been deformed by error, but marred by impurity, and weakened by division. This is the mystery, which if seen on one side would shake our faith and disturb our comfort ; but which, when seen on another side, positively strengthens our faith and brightens our hope. For this religion, thus struggling for existence, and often apparently defeated and well-nigh crushed, not only lives, but spreads. It is unspeakably more powerful in the earth now than it was in the days of the apostles, at the Reformation, or in any former period ; and who can tell how powerful it may ere long become ! Though its history is full of great contractions, it is also full of great expansions ; and how far would an expansion carry the existing Church, that bore it beyond its present bounds as far as Pentecost did the early Church ; or the Reformation, the pre-existing Christianity ? There may be something disappointing and tantalising in a progress like this, which resembles the advance of a ship by tacking, and not in a

straight course, or the rise of the tide by the alternation of flux and reflux. But no one can deny that there is a divine hand in the onward movement, and that it is all the more glorious for its incessant recovery from retardation and retrogression! When the whole is known, it will be pre-eminently Godlike; and it will be seen that God's law of progress, both as to time and space, was as far above man's law as the heavens are above the earth.

(2) Look next to *the instruments* of the progress of redemption. How unlike to all that man could have conceived or devised! This applies even to the Old Testament period, but far more to Christianity. The enemies of Christianity in the early ages said to its converts, "You are the disciples of a carpenter; you are the capture of fishermen and publicans," to which the reply was easy, "Be it so: we are taken captive by one who has conquered the world; we are enclosed in a net which contains philosophers, captains, senators, kings, emperors." Never was a kingdom founded like this kingdom of heaven; not by the sword, like that of Alexander the Great; not by learning, like that of his great master, which was ultimately brought in to prop up the Christian faith; not by a mixture of superstition and force, like that which, not without an element of truth, built up the fabric of the Eastern prophet and his successors. It was founded by preaching; it was propagated by prayer; and no weapons, save those of truth and love, have ever contributed to its real progress. Its leaders were the poor; its soldiers were slaves and women; its heroes were martyrs. How unlike the agents in any other revolution! And yet God "chose the weak things of the world

to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." By similar instrumentalities has Christianity perpetually renewed its strength. When banished from courts and camps, and high places, its revivals have begun with the common people who have again "heard Christ gladly;" and all through, this last and divinest religion, only possible through woman's help, and appealing to a latent power in the sex, which paganism had disowned, and Judaism, with its hardness of heart, had but dimly and faintly recognised, has found its best auxiliary in her, who was last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre. What new development of glorious capabilities, undreamt of before, has the gospel everywhere achieved and made tributary to its progress! Not in the peasants of Galilee only, has it found the teachers of the world, but it has raised up its Luthers and Whitefields from the humblest places, to agitate kingdoms and continents, its Baxters and Bunyans to lead millions to glory, and its Careys, Williamses, and Livingstones to explore new lands for Christ or bring old races to His feet! Nothing so unlike to human prediction, nothing so far from human thought, as the march of this gospel! If we confine it to apostolical successions, to consecrated channels, to time-hallowed boundaries, it spurns them all. Where we dig a path for it, it ceases to flow, and the buried river breaks forth in the desert. Hence our prayer should be, that of Moses, but with more faith, "O Lord, send by whom Thou wilt send!" and never should we despair of a religion which "bloweth where it listeth," and comes from all the

four winds at will to "breathe upon the slain that they may live."

(3) One word only, in the *third* place, as to *hindrances* to the progress of redemption. Man would have thought that hindrances would have speedily been removed, or that if they were suffered to remain or to return, they would have proved unmingled evils to the Church. But God, on the other hand, we can now so far see, by giving the victory slowly, trains the faith and courage of successive generations, and by permitting old enemies to return, or new ones to spring up, shows the unexhausted and inexhaustible energy of His gospel, to face and put down every hostile power. The variety and vicissitude of attack, when it is once surmounted, surrounds the gospel with richer trophies and places on its head more crowns. We are the heirs at this day of all the persecutions of the Cæsars and of all the massacres of Rome. The blood of martyrs enriches us, and the books of apologists and confessors; we divide the spoils of infidelity, and turn the poison of heretics into food; the wrath of Satan is our security, and the gates of hell are the pillars of the truth. As it has been so it shall be. The onsets of unbelief that now disturb us shall be the consolation of our successors, and its scarce-remembered names and war-cries shall swell their song of peace.

§ 5. It is only necessary, having thus spoken of the need, the purpose, the plan, and the progress of redemption, to add, *fifthly*, a few words in regard to the *limits of redemption*. Here also God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. And hence the real and painful difficulty, which has always been felt in regard to the gospel, and perhaps

never more openly expressed than in our own day. Why should not all men, as God wishes, "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"? Why should redemption, in the case of the human family, have any limits at all? This question, it will be borne in mind, is raised only by those who plead for the salvation of all men. Those cannot make this difficulty the rule of their faith, who believe that the teaching of Scripture is, that rejectors of the gospel shall in a future life, first be punished and then destroyed. This raises the same difficulty in principle with the ordinary view, since there is no redemption for all. The question, then, is narrowed as one between the ordinary view, and that of confident doctrinal universalism; and to my mind, we dare not allow the difficulty which I have stated, to drive us to this solution. It is an awful burden which doctrinal universalism takes up. If it profess to rest on the character of God, it must either be on justice or on grace. It cannot be on justice, for if the justice of God bind Him to end sin and penalty, why were they permitted to begin? And if grace be relied on, this presupposes the justice of the penalty, otherwise grace is no more grace, but debt. The issue must then be in God's hands; and how can we aspire to take in all God's view of what a tremendous evil, like sin, and especially the rejection of the Son of God, may demand? If from our abstract views of the character of God, we pass, as a question of interpretation, to what His purpose is announced to be, in Holy Scripture, the awful seriousness and terribleness of its warnings can hardly be denied; the most solemn of them all being contained in the recorded words of Christ Himself.

To explain these words, without seeming to explain them away, if there be no irreversible and enduring penalty, is a hard, and according to the past sense of the Christian Church in almost all its sections, an impossible task ; and therefore the responsibility is great of suppressing these warnings, and practically encouraging all men to hope that it shall be well with them in the latter end. For reasons like these, I feel that for my part I cannot cease to testify, that the sinner who refuses to accept salvation by immediately embracing Christ as his Redeemer, and walking in His ways, through the hope of a mercy that shall come to all men, however impenitent and rebellious, is incurring the most awful risk, as well as forfeiting blessing utterly incalculable ; and necessity is laid upon me as preaching this gospel, to proclaim it as deliverance from the "wrath to come." It is to me a burden, which the stoutest heart cannot bear without trembling, to set forth these terrors as allied with eternal mercy. I am not called on to justify these ways of God to men ; but God will vindicate His own ways, how far soever above the ways of men they may seem to be. Nor is any feature of the Bible revelation more serious and more impressive, than that the penalties of the future are invariably represented as no arbitrary infliction, but the outgrowth of sin which has been allowed to come to maturity till remedy is past, when the soul takes home its own lost condition as not God's act but its own, and finds the word (O how sadly !) true, "ye would not come to me that ye might have life."

What should be our sentiments, dear brethren, as we this day once more, in holy communion, draw near to a God in Christ, so unutterably above us,

and yet who has come so inexpressibly nigh ! There is an element of grandeur and of awe in our salvation which deepens its tenderness. Let us put off our shoes from our feet, for the place where we are is holy ground. Let us bow down before Him whose way is in the sea, and His path in great waters, and whose footsteps are not known ; and yet whose counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. Of this let us be sure, that though His ways are above us, they are so only as the heavens, to supply a pathway for the sun, and a fountain for the rain and for the dew ; and that through the humble faith that trusts Him in all, every cloud shall break in blessings on our head. O that we all proved Him, confided in Him, served Him, in this mortal darkness, with loyal service ! Then should the day break and the shadows flee ; and the solution of every mystery should be love !—*Amen.*

IX

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.”—REV. xiv. 13.

SOME years ago, when worshipping in one of the churches in the canton of Glarus in Switzerland, I could not but be struck with the truth of the remark, that there, as in some other parts of that wonderful country, the mountains look in at the windows. Wherever there was an opening, some part of a giant mountain could be seen looking in, as with a lofty and yet kindly eye ; and the effect was all the more striking that in that gray and venerable town, more than three centuries and a half before, the great Swiss Reformer, Zwingli, had begun that work, which was to have such consequences for his country and for the world. I have been impressed with the likeness of this relation of heaven to the Church below in this book of the Revelation. Everywhere, so to speak, heaven looks in at the windows ; and there are not only looks and sympathies, but voices, reminding those engaged in the earthly worship that a

higher company is not far off from any one of them ; and that where the shadow now falls the summit is also near. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them."

I do not undertake to show at what point in the history of this mysterious book, considered as a forecast of the future, these words come in. Nor do I raise the question, whether those, who are here spoken of as dying "in the Lord," were disciples caught away from the labours of earth by persecution, or in connection with some other crisis that brought with it toil and conflict. It is enough for us to know that all Christians are required to work in the spirit of martyrs ; and that they have one and all the assurance, that when they die, they die as truly in the Lord, as any martyr who seals his testimony with his blood ; and further, that while the blessedness of the martyr is in some respects peculiar and exalted, yet in its essential features it is the same with that of every Christian who "is faithful unto death, and who receives a crown of life."

Considering these words as, in general, descriptive of the heavenly blessedness, I shall endeavour to answer *three* questions regarding it, which are here suggested : *First*, How is this heavenly blessedness *attested* ? *Secondly*, How is it *gained* ? and *Thirdly*, How is it *enjoyed* ? And may the Spirit who seals these words, assist our study of them, by His divine grace !

I. Our *first* question, then, is—"How is this heavenly blessedness *attested* ?" We all profess to believe in heaven. How do we know that there is

such a place and such a state? If we cannot give a good answer, the apostle John could. We regard him as the author of this book ; and even rationalising critics of our own century have come round to this opinion. In his solitude in the isle of Patmos, where as he tells us in his first chapter, he was " for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," amongst other voices which he heard, was this one from heaven, saying unto him, " Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!" " Mere enthusiasm!" you say, " the wish was father to the thought. He only dreamt in that lonely isle, and turned the vision into a reality!" A strange delusion surely that could give visions, so coherent, so far-reaching, so stupendous and sublime! Could he have written all this, even had he wished it, without inspiration from God? And consider what had gone before in the history of the apostle. He had lived amidst wonders, which he could not but believe, and of which he had been a great part himself. He had kept company with One who professed to come down from heaven, and who had opened His mouth to describe it ; nay, who had come back from heaven, when He rose from the dead, and shone in all its glory ; and who had then, in the sight of this apostle and his brethren, gone away into heaven by a visible ascension, till a cloud received him out of their sight. Had we lived all that this Galilean fisherman lived through, should we have doubted? Should we not rather with one, who had doubted, and been fully convinced, have exclaimed, " My Lord and my God!" and then gone away, as these apostles did, to convince others that Jesus was the way, and heaven the region to which he led? If they had seen all that they testify, would they not have been less than

men, if they had doubted it? And shall we be wiser men than they, if we disbelieve it? Suppose that like Paul we had been caught up into the third heaven, should we have distrusted our own experience? No modern critic doubts that Paul makes this assertion in 2 Cor. xii. 2, for all admit that he wrote the second Epistle to the Corinthians; and if Paul had given us the narrative of his experience as to Paradise, and then confirmed it by signs and wonders, such as in 2 Cor. xii. 12 he tells the Corinthians he wrought among them, would it have been our duty still to disbelieve it? Such is the verdict of modern unbelief, so that even if our friends came back from heaven to tell us of its blessedness, it would be our duty to treat them as dreamers or liars! This then is the kind of evidence—the kind of voice from heaven, that convinces, that says, “Write,” and it is written down. But this testimony, thus of an outward kind, has next an inward voucher to its own authenticity. It bears the stamp of the heaven, whence it professes to come. It is, you say, only a dream. But what a dream! Did ever mortal man, outside of the word of God, dream thus of the heavenly blessedness? Here is not the Greek or Roman heaven, such as we have in its brightest form in the sixth book of the *Æneid* of Virgil; for this is a heaven of eating and drinking, of running and wrestling, of expatiating in green fields, and basking in the sunshine. This is not the old Scandinavian or Teutonic heaven of eternal battles and immortal drunkenness. Here is not the Mohammedan heaven of feasting and sensual pleasure. I grant that the heaven of the Koran has hardly received justice. One of the translators of that book, Sale, has

endeavoured to show that its heaven is more spiritual than is often supposed, involving spiritual exercises, such as communion with God. To this, after the closest study I have been able to give, I cannot assent ; or if such elements come in, they are of a faint and doubtful character. Where the Koran has not received justice, is in making it more sensual than it is, for it supposes something—marriage ties in the world after death, the polygamy of earth reflected in the mirror of heaven. Still this is a very low and earthly attraction, compared with the higher anticipations of Scripture ; and when we think that Mohammed came not only after the Old Testament, but after the New, we see what kind of a heaven is congenial to men's natural fancy, and how different the heaven of the Bible would have been, had it been the creation of man. Here is a heaven of holiness and purity ; of likeness to God, and fellowship with Christ, of eternal contemplation, worship, and praise ! Did this dream, then, come out of the human mind and heart ? Could it have come out of your own ? Does it not speak God its author, and heaven its birthplace, so that when the voice here says, Write ; the Spirit of God, as it were, takes up the Word, and says, yes, Write ; for it is all true ! Nor is this all the evidence that we have for the existence of heaven. The Spirit says, Yea ! in a manner, if possible, more emphatic. It is not only in books that we read of heaven, even in that Book, which is above all. There is a testimony in living epistles, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. This is our *third* evidence of there being a heavenly world, what may be called the *evidence from Christian character*. Had you been in company with the apostle John, you

would have said, Here is heaven begun ! Suppose that this man still somewhere survive, and that there are others of the like character, who equally outlast the stroke of death, and meet in the same region, where they can reveal their character to each other, would there not be already many of the elements of heaven ? And to crown all, let us suppose that it is the region, whither Christ in soul and body is gone ; and what would be wanting to make heaven essentially complete ? As coals when thrown together and kindled make a fire, so must saints after death, in all the warmth of their love, when together with each other and with their Lord, awake the blessedness of heaven. We see the prophecy of this, in the renewed character and happy intercourse of Christians in the Church below ; so that the Christian Church in all its graces and in all its virtues, as it is a preparation for heaven, so is it a prophecy of heaven ; and this is the meaning of the apostle in 2 Cor. v. 5, " Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit." What the apostle here means is this ; as the earnest is the first part of the wages, and the pledge that all shall be paid, so the heaven already begun in the souls of Christians by the Holy Spirit, is the pledge of heaven's existence and the dawn of heaven's joys. This is a beautiful argument and a conclusive one. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that God is " the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him ;" and then in the same 11th chapter, we read, that those who, like the patriarchs, confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, declare plainly that they *seek* a country. Here then is God the rewarder of the seeker, with a country ready for those

who seek for it. Shall the lower creatures in nature find what they seek, and not the higher? Shall the swallow, led by a divine instinct to the south, be rewarded, and the saint disappointed? No. The attraction towards the magnet is a proof that the magnet is there. The sun is behind the hill; but you are certain that he is in the sky, for the mountain-top is lit up, and the figures upon it move up and down like burnished gold! So Milton argues from the spicy gales that strike the ship that they are blowing from the shores of "Araby the blest;" and thus the Christian sails on amidst ever-increasing fragrance to the land into which he is to have entrance ministered unto him abundantly. Let these then be reasons to us for the existence of this "land of pure delight;" and whoever may neglect it, whoever may discredit it, let us not be disobedient to the heavenly vision, but labour to enter into this rest!

II. This leads now to our *second* topic, raised by the *second* question—"How is this heavenly blessedness gained?" This is a question of vital moment. I have heard of a remark made at the end of a glowing sermon on heaven by a certain hearer, that the best sermon on heaven was to tell men how to reach it. This was going too far, for men need to be roused, as well as directed; but it is also true, that if they are not directed, they are roused in vain. So here, while this voice heard, awakens, it also guides. It clearly lays down *two* things as needful to the inheritance of the skies. The one is *faith*; and the other is *holy obedience*. Each in its place is necessary; though they are not necessary in exactly the same sense; for the one gives a *title*, and the other a *meetness* for this blessedness.

§ 1. *Faith*, then, is needful to give a *title* to the heavenly blessedness: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Faith is necessary to secure union to the Lord. Men simply as men are not savingly united to the Lord; and therefore cannot die blessed in Him. This is a connection that needs to be acquired; and to those to whom the gospel comes, it is acquired by faith in Christ. "As many as received Him to them gave He power (revised version '*the right*,' but the argument is the same) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John i. 12); and so also in Gal. iii. 26, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." This is the uniform doctrine of Holy Scripture, so that reliance upon a natural Fatherhood of God as a certain source of Sonship and of inheritance must be disclaimed. It is to those that are "in Christ Jesus" that there "is no condemnation" (Rom. viii. 1); and our Lord expressly says to the unbelieving Jews, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24); and again, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John xiv. 5). All the blessings of redemption are made to depend on this vital union (1 Cor. i. 30), "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"; and if this be so, how can glorification be sundered from the rest? As this was the teaching of Paul in regard to others, so was it in application to himself, for his only hope of a blessed resurrection lay in giving up his own righteousness, and in being found in Christ: "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having

mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Philip. iii. 8-11). Much of our current literature needs to be completed by the insertion of this Scripture definition, as for example the beautiful lines of the poet, which, however, do not deny the truth, if limited to Christians—

" There is no death, what seems so is transition !
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian
Whose portal we call death."

§ 2. The *second* point as to the means by which the heavenly blessedness is gained, is the necessity of *holy obedience*. Heaven is not merited in any sense by holy obedience; for in the Christian salvation, all is of grace. But the faith which unites to Jesus, also brings forth the fruits of righteousness of which "the end is everlasting life." Mark also the language of the text, "They rest *from their labours*." If there are no labours, there is no *rest*. "Their works do follow them." They follow as the shadow follows the man, the one thing inseparable from the other, when the sun is in the sky. Beautifully has it been said, that the good works of Christians do not go before them to open heaven; but they must follow after, to make it a place of blessedness; for the spirit of heaven is the spirit that brings forth good works below; and thus "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." There are doubtless to this law, understood as intelligent and conscious Christian holiness,

exceptions. There are the infants of the human family ; and there are others, not outwardly capable of hearing Christ's word, and of bringing forth the fruits of visible and distinctive Christian holiness. In regard to these, our hopes may safely extend as far as the wisdom and love of the God of our salvation shall appoint. But while we thus enlarge with this safe and Scriptural explanation the terms here stated in the text, let us beware, especially in relation to our own hopes, of anything that would relax our own diligence in seeking to enter into that rest. Let us not plead, for example, the case of the penitent malefactor. Was it no work on his part to witness for Christ in the midst of all but universal unbelief and scorn, and to seek to bring his companion in sin to repentance ? Who, almost, has such labours set over against his name, which will follow him to the end of the world, and to the day of judgment ? Thus, let us remember, that if we are justified by faith, we are to be judged by works ; and " let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it ! "

III. We now come to our third question—How is *this heavenly blessedness to be enjoyed* ? The answer is, " They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Here there are evidently two ideas, most beautifully connected, and yet completely distinguished. *There is the rest of the worker*, and *there is the continued influence of the work*. What a glorious and divine conception of heaven !

§ 1. There is, *first*, the *rest of the worker*. It is not sloth, torpor, or inactivity. God forbid. That would be no heaven to an Elijah, a Paul, a Luther, a Wesley, and many more whom I need not name.

Even the idea of the sleep of the soul had nothing attractive to an indefatigable nature like Calvin, who wrote against it. But it is rest ; rest the most pure, refreshing, and exalted. It is rest to the body, from all the tear and wear of physical exertion, from all the pain, all the disease, all the wasting struggle which, in the case of the noblest Christian worker, sooner or later ends in death ; and it is rest to the spirit from all anxiety, from all disappointment, from all sense of mental exhaustion worse than bodily, from all consciousness of sin and imperfection born with the conception, marring the growth and haunting the memory of every human performance, from all overwhelming responsibility, which casts its shadow everywhere, and the most, where the work is most fruitful and difficult, from all painful inequality to the demands of a reaping-time where the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few ! Who that knows anything of Christian labour in its highest forms—the labour of the Christian parent, who travails as in birth till Christ be formed in the hearts of all his children—the labour of the teacher, who regards the welfare of the soul as inseparable from the growth of the mind—the labour of the Christian minister and missionary, who must be “ instant in season and out of season,” and strive to be pure from the blood of all men, “ watching for souls as those that must give account,”—but will appreciate this delightful and soul-soothing prospect of rest ! No more out amidst the billows, toiling in rowing for that the wind is contrary, but at last in smooth water, and with the ripple breaking on the shore ! No more down in the mine, with the hard and painful routine of grimy toil amidst darkness, and fire-damp, and rocky hindrances at

every turn, but aloft in the pure air, the soiled raiment laid aside for the Sabbath dress, and the song and melody of the sanctuary filling each weary sense ! No more in the thick of the fight, with the tongue parched, and the hand cleaving to the hilt, but seated at the unremoving feast, with the companions of peace-giving victory ! To some indeed of Christ's great host of labourers, rest is more attractive than to others. Some find rest only in change of employment, and rise with rising strength to bear the burden and heat of the day. But sooner or later "the servant earnestly desireth the shadow ;" and if no rest came they would utterly fail and be discouraged. How cheering is it then to know that the conflict is not for ever, that the burden is not eternal, and that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). The rest spoken of in this text is a "Sabbatism ;" the keeping of an endless Sabbath, with its holy calm for ever unbroken, as fresh as when, in its virgin beauty, it first dawned upon the emancipated spirit, recalling Eden with its dews and flowers, but without trail of the serpent upon them, since for the redeemed all the sanctities of that higher paradise are over-arched and guarded by the "rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald." O to be a partaker of that eternal security and peace ! O to meet again those who have earlier entered into that rest and wait our coming ! O to dwell in that long "Forever ;" where the highest effort, like the iris on the fountain, mounts to the brightest joy, and where the ever-circling day knows no shade and no night ! O Son of God, whose hand beckons us to this place which Thou hast prepared, send it down and lift us

thither ! O Spirit of God, that speakest of the blessed dead to faith, speak at last to sense, and may we awake and find ourselves among them !

§ 2. But the *second* element of blessedness, and one which in the case of the Christian worker, is more positive, is the *continued influence of the work*, " Their works do follow them." It is delightful to think of the perpetuity of all goodness. It is not too much to say, brethren, that a truly good action, an action done from true love to it, and from a regard to the will and glory of God in it, lasts for ever. You are tempted to give an angry look. The memory of Christ restrains you ; and you give a kind and loving one ; and that glance—though sent forth in a moment of time, will be fixed as in a picture to all eternity. You are on the point of speaking a harsh word, not without provocation ; but love, inspired by Christ, conquers, so that you speak a tender one ; and that momentary vibration of the air will echo to endless ages and bless your soul in heaven. The simplest act of self-denial that a child performs, the father's blessing, the mother's prayer, these will repeat themselves ever more in the sounding-board of heaven, and never die away ! Have we not some shadow of this perpetual influence even here upon earth ? What words and looks, it may be of friends long departed, it may be of ministers, who have been for many years in their graves, still hang about us, and make us better than we otherwise should be ! Nor are these influences for good that we have all received only to be traced back to persons of position and prominence in the true Church of God. The humblest have wrought with them ; and it may be as effectually ; and the piety that may have little

memorial on earth shall be startled at the wide circle of its influences which it shall meet in heaven ! I delight to think of the obligation, which Christians have to the obscure and the unknown, to those who were " never heard of half a mile from home," and of the glorious chapters of celestial history that will then be written when the rich and the poor meet together and the Lord is the Maker of them all ! What a revelation will then be made of the bearing of one Christian life upon another, largely in proportion to the closeness of the relations between them, but also with a wondrous liberty of grace to find instruments of the highest good in ways past finding out. We speak too hastily of the history of the Church as already written, and of those who shine in its firmament of stars of greater or lesser magnitude. The history of the Church in regard to the influence of its members can only be written in the world of immortality ; and what secrets of domestic, of congregational, and even of world-wide Christian import shall then be unveiled, where there is no fear of jealousy or misunderstanding being aroused, or of sensitive delicacy being offended. Much of the blessedness of heaven will arise from these disclosures, and from the endless bonds which they shall seal ! In the light of these undying soul-relationships the labour of the way shall be forgotten. Paul may be heard exclaiming, Blessed be God for my bonds and scourging in Philippi, which have brought this jailer here with all his house ! John may be heard exclaiming, Blessed be my exile in Patmos ; for but for it these visions had never been opened to me, nor the multitudes cheered and comforted whom they have led hither ! You may hear all the martyrs

exclaiming, Blessed be God for the shedding of our blood, from which all these immortal souls have sprung up as from precious seed ! Ah, then it will be seen how the bitter tears, and wrestling prayers, and long-deferred hopes of God's saints have been crowned, and how those at length have been brought home to God, who were born as it were out of due time ! Many of us have made pilgrimages to the lonely spots—some of the wildest and most secluded in our country—where our forefathers, when hunted on moor and mountain, testified for Christ, and for His sake loved not their lives unto death. Now these solitary wanderers have shaped our history, have given us our laws and our liberties ; and they are leading the fight, in the heart of our great cities for the gospel, the Bible, and the Sabbath ; and in the midst of vast colonies, where new nations are rising, they are stamping their image to the latest posterity ! Such is the perpetuity of moral influence, and of its final disclosure ; for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known ! And with all the other following of the good works of the righteous, let us not forget its influence upon themselves ; for what are we but what our works make us ? What on earth or what in heaven ? We live in the atmosphere of our own actions, and if we have lived to God and to Christ, the work tells upon ourselves, more than upon all besides ; and the Spirit that prompted it is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life ! O that we could all remember this in our earthly course, that Heaven and Hell are but the summation of our daily thoughts and feelings and actions ! You put a slate into the hands of the school-child, who then

writes down the sums, till the line is drawn, and the amount set down, neither less nor more. This is a parable of the life of the child, and of our own ; for when all is stated, all that we have done, all that we have been, death draws the line, and adds the items ; and this sum-total, proclaimed in judgment, is the best or the worst to us for all eternity !

If these things be so, dear brethren, let us not mourn the dead that "die in the Lord." Shall we mourn rest, freedom, blessedness ? Shall we mourn, when heaven sends down a special voice that bids us rejoice, and when the Spirit of God repeats the exhortation ? No. While we weep the tears of nature, as even Christ did, let us also hear His consolations which proclaim Himself as the Resurrection and the Life ; and catching new hopes from the blessedness of those, who, living and dying, have brought heaven nearer us than before, let us strive to rejoin them, as they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple !

How can any of us be satisfied, till we seek and obtain through union to Christ the comfortable hope that we are in the Lord, and that through His grace, our works, with all their failures and shortcomings, are so wrought in Him as to leave a memorial of the right kind behind ! Nothing is so amazing as the indifference of men, even of gospel-hearers, as to whether they are in Christ or no ; and if this be founded on the idea that it does not matter, seeing that in the end all will come to the same issue, I ask, how can those expect to be saved by the mercy of God, who make light of it—for the goodness of God is designed to lead to repentance—and who even abuse it by making it an argument for putting repent-

ance far from them? The Christian minister cannot argue with those who are living in sin that grace may abound. He can only warn them, and appeal to their own consciences, that if they believe that in any sense Christ has died for them, they are bound to requite it by immediately following Him; and that if they expect anything here or hereafter from Him, they are trifling with that hope and pouring contempt upon it, by refusing to live as His disciples! I therefore warn all in His name, that against the foolish virgins, the door is shut, that the unprofitable servant is cast into outer darkness; and that this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil! To you, therefore, professing to rely on Christ, and yet practically rejecting Him, hoping for His heaven, and yet turning aside from the only path that He has opened and revealed which can reach it, my one duty is to proclaim repentance, and to recall Christ's own solemn words, which, with all their apparent severity, are the words of tenderest love, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."—*Amen.*

X

THE HAPPINESS OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

“Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”—DEUT. xxxiii. 29.

MOSES like the sun looks largest at his setting. Nothing is grander in the Old Testament, than the farewell which the great leader here takes of his people ; and nothing more suits the majestic scenes which had gone before and those which were immediately to follow as they are here recorded. For this among other reasons I cannot agree with those who part the book of Deuteronomy from the rest of the Pentateuch ; and ascribe little or nothing of it to Israel's great Chief and Founder. They differ very much indeed among themselves, while agreed in separating the book of Deuteronomy from the rest ; for the older opinion was that this came later than the other books of professedly Mosaic legislation ; whereas the newest view is that Deuteronomy is older than most that professes to bear the Mosaic stamp, ranking as high as the days of Jeremiah, while the great body of nominally Mosaic history that is

arranged beforehand belongs rather in its substance to a period after the captivity. This is not the place to go into these inquiries ; and I shall only consider these schemes not as they differ from each other, but as they agree in separating these earlier books from the unity which they have till lately been held to form, and in denying their Mosaic authorship. Abiding by the view of unity, and of unity carrying with it, to all intents and purposes, Mosaic origin, I shall only notice in favour of this, the remarkable points of agreement, between the books that precede and this book of Deuteronomy. I am aware that differences are also pleaded ; but these are more appreciable by scholars. I wish to point out some marking lines of unity as to which all can judge. I appeal then, *first*, to the great character of Moses himself. This is something that runs through all these books alike. Take the first three that speak of Moses,—Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,—on the one side, and Deuteronomy on the other side, you have the same grand and lofty character, alone with God, yet bearing on his heart the vast multitude and burden of the people, building on the widest principles and yet equal to the minutest details ; a model of magnanimity, and yet with human infirmities that break off his work, helped all through by the most amazing miracle, but only making it a more passionate argument for the people to help themselves. Does any one doubt that you have the same Moses in the first three books, and then in Deuteronomy ? And where did this come from but from reality ? or could this be created out of nothing many centuries after Moses' day ? *Secondly*, I appeal to the *Ten Commandments*, found in the one set of books, and then

in Deuteronomy. There are minor differences that have been founded on ; but in the great texture of the Decalogue everything is alike, in both shapes, as it is like nothing else in all ancient history. One modern critic thinks that the Decalogue was too wonderful to have been developed so early as the time of Moses ; while the world was equal to the development of it by the time of the captivity. I think this a good argument that the world was not equal to the development of it at all, and that therefore it was given to Moses by divine revelation. I appeal, *thirdly*, to the prophecies of captivity, that are found on the one side in Leviticus in the 26th chapter, and on the other in Deuteronomy in the 28th. These are so similar, that it is not natural to ascribe them to a different origin ; but if we do, there are great difficulties for both classes who deny our position ; for to both the prophecies come in one shape or other wonderfully like truth long before the events happened, and those who place Deuteronomy first, cannot explain how the later (to them) in Leviticus is the less terrible. *Fourthly*, I appeal to the wonderful similarity in the masses of sacred song, that gather in both sets of writings. Thus, in the first set of books, including Genesis, we have in the 49th chapter the dying song of Jacob ; then in Exodus in the 15th the song at the Red Sea ; then in Numbers 23rd and 24th, the wonderful prophecies of Balaam ; and then, on the other side, in the last book, viz. Deuteronomy, we find these two chapters, 32nd and 33rd, containing Moses' last Song, and his Blessing upon the Tribes. There is this marking similarity of style, embracing some of the loftiest poetry in the Bible, and binding together Deuteronomy with the

foregoing books :—it being worthy of notice, that the first in the series, the dying Blessing of Jacob on his sons, and the dying Blessing of Moses on the tribes, are so much alike. No doubt there are those who are ready with the cry, "Imitation! it is the feeble echo of later writers!" But I ask if there is anything feeble in Deuteronomy xxxiii., even compared with Genesis xlix. : and I ask if it be not a more probable explanation, that even as the fatherly heart of Jacob was strengthened to foretell the destiny of his sons, so the not less fatherly heart of Moses was enabled to foretell their destiny as now grown into tribes, all of which the great leader had long borne upon his heart! There is a singular beauty, and, as I may say, originality in the Deuteronomic blessing before us, that when Moses had blessed all separately, he blesses them for the last time together as God's united Israel. Let me just add, that Moses, in blessing the people, is an anticipation of Christ taking leave of His Church with hands outstretched to bless them. Thus all Scripture repeats itself, not with the barrenness of a mere literary parallelism, where one writer repeats another, but with the fertility of a grand sacred history, where situations, even the most unexpected, recur, and all is prophetic of what is to come.

It will be to a development of this thought, that is, the similarity of the Christian Israel in point of blessedness, to Israel under Moses, that, humbly relying on divine guidance, I shall further consider the words, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found

liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

§ 1. I remark, then, *first*, that ancient Israel was blessed, and the Christian Israel is blessed *in the guidance of a divine Leader*. This is not in so many words declared ; but the joyful sense of this lies in the whole expression. It was not of Egypt or Canaan, that these words were spoken. The pillar of cloud and of fire did not rise in the camp of the one or of the other ; and no majestic figure, like that of Moses, stood on behalf of the one people or the other, to announce the will and guarantee the protection of God. Now, this is still the difference between the Christian Israel and the world. This so-called particularism is a stumbling-block to the world ; and the fact is denied. It is the world's sin where the same offer has come and has been met by disobedience ; still the distinction abides. There is darkness in Egypt ; but the children of Israel have light in their dwellings. There is a wilderness to the saint and to the sinner ; but the saint finds in it a divine Hand to lead him through, while the sinner wanders and perishes. A greater than Moses has appeared to fulfil the emblem, no mere human messenger however exalted, but God Himself manifested in the flesh, and given to be " a Leader and a Commander to the people." These are now His words, " I am the way and the truth and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me ! " " I am the light of the world ; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The universal Church has heard these words and has followed Jesus ; and the last convert who has put them to the proof, is to be congratulated

in being now happy under such a guide. *Two* elements here meet in the special knowledge which is supplied for the guidance of the Christian Israel ; elements which in knowledge are of supreme value. There is the element of *importance* and the element of *certainty*. Christ has not come into the world to lead His Israel, without the need and the capacity to make the most important of all questions known. The pardon of sin and the way in which it is to be secured ; the standard of duty and the means of being raised up to it ; the existence of a life beyond the grave and the possibility of reaching it ; these, and all that is included in these, are the points on which the God of Israel through His Son has showed His people light ; and therefore the glad strain is everywhere heard, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound !" But the *certainty* of this knowledge is equal to its importance. It is often said, How can a professed revelation which deals with matters of history, and history too, now hundreds of years old, bring with it certainty, original and soul-satisfying certainty ? Now I am prepared to take up this challenge, and to show that Christians have an original and soul-satisfying certainty in regard to Christ and His salvation, such as men have not in regard to many of the operations of their daily life. How much of your most needful knowledge in ordinary life is second-hand ? Are you a mariner at sea, or even in charge of the vessel ? What original knowledge have you of astronomy, following only as you do the almanack ; or do you know enough of the highest mathematics to understand on what principle the time-tables are constructed ? Are you a foreman in some great industrial establish-

ment ; do you know enough of the principles of mechanics, or metallurgy, or steam, to play your part with independent light and clearness ; or are you not at every point the servant of a higher science which you take on trust ? So is it with the farmer, who may know little of chemistry, the banker, who may be ignorant of theories of the currency, the physician, who may be licensed to deal out life and death in the use of a knowledge much of which he must take from higher teachers. But in regard to salvation, the highest and saving knowledge must be repeated by every one in direct contact with the living God, who carries the testimony of His word home to the soul by the voice of conscience and of the Holy Spirit. The history of the Bible shines in this light of felt adaptation to our wants, and of experienced power to bless us, so that it is taken up, as it were, into the region of inner certainty. Hence it is that the Christian does not take his faith from any minister or any Church. "He has an unction from the Holy One, and knows all things," so far as these are needful to be believed for salvation. And here the greatest scholar and the humblest saint meet on the same level ; and Christ is to each alike by the illumination of the same word, applied by the same Spirit, the light of life. This is what Christ promises ; and this is what He fulfils, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Surely then, those are blessed to whom a fountain of certainty is thus opened, which flows with ever-increasing stream ; for the light of Christ's knowledge ever grows as we follow on to know the Lord ; and His going forth is prepared like the morning. But blessed beyond all

expression are those in whom this faith is already real and true, over whom Christ has rejoiced in spirit, thanking on their behalf the Lord of heaven and earth, and over whom He has taken up the ancient benediction, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona! for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven!"

§ 2. I remark, *secondly*, that ancient Israel was blessed, and the Christian Israel is blessed *in the memory of a great deliverance*. Ancient Israel was "a people saved by the Lord." They had had other deliverances; but their greatest was from Egypt. God had brought them forth "with a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm." How stupendous and worthy of God were the mighty plagues in Egypt! It has sometimes been said, that these plagues were only an aggravation of the natural calamities incident to that region and climate. But, however this may be said of some of the plagues, it is not true of all; for is there in Egypt any natural turning of water into blood, or any periodical death of the first-born? If any one wanted an example, an unmistakable example of a miracle, could anything be so striking as this death of one child only in every house, in one night, and that the first-born, not to add that all this was announced beforehand? The miracle here could be assailed only on the ground of its evidence, but not of its distinguishableness; and it so happens also, that this is one of the miracles of which the evidence is strongest, being attested by the standing monument of the Jewish Passover, which commemorates it all over the world to this day. And then came the crowning wonder of deliverance at the Red Sea, by which liberty,

nationality, the whole great and not yet exhausted future was secured! The sense of this pulsates in the whole succeeding history, and those who try to construct the history without this have a hard problem. The echo of the song of Moses never dies away, but perpetuates itself in the Psalms and Prophets, and in other Feasts and Celebrations, besides the Passover. The whole nation stood a monument of deliverance, conspicuous even to Balaam, to the Dukes of Edom, to the mighty men of Moab, and to the inhabitants of Palestine, on whom "sorrow took hold" when they thought of it. On Israel itself the impression was that of mingled awe and thankfulness: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" and nothing was ever desired in the shape of deliverance, greater than the return of this saving might, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old! Art Thou not it, that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon? Art Thou not it, which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea, a way for the ransomed to pass over?" Now, dare we say, that any wonder of deliverance like this, lies in the breast of the Christian Israel, that is, in the memory of those who form the living Church of Jesus Christ, even as Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, has identified the one Israel with the other, when he says: "As many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God"? This is one of the points at which the world is most startled by the testimony of the Christian Church, looking upon it

with an incredulity hard to be overcome. But in the face of this disbelief, it must be affirmed that every true Christian has experienced a wonder of divine power and mercy even greater than the literal Israel, even as wonders in the spiritual world are greater than in the material. The Christian, awakened to the ruin of his state through sin, has stood as on the brink of a Red Sea of guilt, formed by the swelling of his own trespasses, with the avenger behind, and no possible escape before. But behold, the cross of Christ, stretched out with a mightier power than the rod of Moses, has opened a way through the depths, and he has passed safely over into the land where the ransomed and pardoned dwell, and shall never come into condemnation. He sees his grand enemy and all his host defeated and destroyed, while the prey is taken from the mighty and the lawful captive delivered. It is a rescue not for time only, but for eternity ; and, with unutterable joy mingled with trembling, he sings, not the song of Moses, but of the Lamb : " O Lord, I will praise Thee with all my heart, and I will glorify Thy name for ever, for great is Thy mercy towards me, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell ! " The rescue is once for all ; but as Israel by disobedience entailed repeated enslavement, so do Christians, alas ! by renewed sin, incur once and again the painful sense of loss and danger ; and as deliverance again comes, with the assurance of pardon : " I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins ; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee ! " the voice of penitent Israel renews the grateful strain : " Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it : shout, ye lower parts of the

earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein ; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob : and glorified Himself in Israel !" This deep joy of emancipation from liability to peril and death is not all that is foreshadowed to the Christian by the exodus of ancient Israel ; but as Israel rose from degradation and the habits of servitude to inward freedom, so does the Christian walk in a new spiritual liberty, no longer a bondman in Egypt, but the Lord's freeman, no longer a moral outcast, with every lust for his taskmaster, but a member of a chosen generation and peculiar people, of whom the Holy One of Israel is King ! There are no such songs of jubilee, written by the brightest genius in the annals of any people for the service of the loftiest patriotism, as resound in the festivals of the Christian Church, in celebration of a "love divine all love excelling," and when these have filled the utmost limits of the earthly temple, they will burst into the illimitable song of the New Jerusalem : "Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb," "Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever !"

§ 3. I remark, *thirdly*, that ancient Israel was blessed, and the Christian Israel is blessed *in the prospect of certain victory*. How emphatic is the language of Moses in this last utterance. So far as I know, this is the first time that Jehovah is compared to armour : "The shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency." Here are already the defensive and offensive weapons of the 6th of Ephesians ; and the Apostle Paul is not more

confident, after so many stages of the mighty warfare, than Moses. Nay, we may say that Moses did not need to ascend to the top of the mountain, and see the land of promise, ere he gained the fullest assurance that it should all be conquered. There are those who take exception to the idea of the Universal Lord choosing out a particular people, putting Himself at the head of them, and fighting their battles. We may not be able to meet all the difficulties connected with such an arrangement. But we may see how, if the peoples cast out before Israel had become worthless and incapable of any high destiny, God might thus by a stroke of judgment cut them off. We may see how, if Israel were called on to become a great nation with a special work, they needed a territorial basis for it such as God might thus provide, training them also for their call, in such a way, both of stimulus and of warning, as would not have been desirable by ordinary conquest. And we may see too, that these dispensations did not affect Israel for instruction and discipline alone, but had a bearing on the highest welfare of mankind. But whether we can understand it fully or no, facts may be divine facts still ; and therefore we are called on to believe that Israel is here on its way by conquest, with Jehovah at its head, to the accomplishment of a great mission unlike that of any other people, and one which made its war at once sacred and certain of success. The nation can never have forgotten these last utterances of their leader. Hardly has he left them in circumstances of mystery, though not of depression, ere the words begin to be fulfilled. Jordan is passed by miracle. The walls of Jericho fall.

Ai is burned with fire. On the hosts of Southern Canaan, the thunderbolts of heaven descend, while the light remains in the sky ; and the kings of the north under the shadow of Hermon, are equally scattered and destroyed. The sons of Anak that had appalled the spies are laid low, and the cities great and walled up to heaven are swept away like the chaff of the threshing-floor. Nothing was so firm, but that it melted, nothing so high, but it came down ; and at last, when all that Moses was commanded of the Lord was done, "the land had rest from war."

Similar to this is the work of the Christian Israel—the Church of the New Testament—and not less its resources for its great enterprise : "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal ;" but our work is not less militant. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood ;" but we do wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Our warfare is on God's side with rebellion against God, with the temples of idolatry, superstition, and false religion, with the dark embattled hosts of pride and lust, of avarice and cruelty from one end of the world to the other. Wherever "the Canaanite is still in the land ;" wherever there is that within us or without us, that exalts itself against God, there must our deadly strife be to bring it down ; and every high thought must be brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." The range of our spiritual geography is very limited. There "remains much land to be possessed." But this is our great, our arduous, our world-wide mission, impossible to ourselves, but

possible with God, and made by Him at once our duty and our happiness. Does any one ask : How can it be happy, to have a work so high and difficult to undertake, as must be grappled with, if by grace we are to conquer ourselves and subdue the world for God ?

The question shows, and this I would specially ask the young to lay to heart, great ignorance of human nature, as God has made it. We need something great, lofty, and difficult, to make us happy, or, in the Bible sense, "blessed." One great root of human misery is forgetfulness of this truth, the forgetfulness of what has been called "the worship of difficulty." Men can be happy amidst pain, poverty, privation of every kind, so long as they have an exalted object to live for, which rouses all their energies, and draws out their best affections. But they cannot possibly be happy amidst frivolity and ease, amidst ignoble sloth and degrading selfishness. Even without true religion, with its tasks and rewards, there is in self-sacrifice an elevation and a joy. Let a man of the world, who has lived for self, be roused for a time by some higher interest, which spurs all his powers into activity, and makes him think nothing difficult, he feels for that time a kindling of soul like happiness within ; and the deep regret is, that in the school of Christ, he fails to have it raised higher than it otherwise can be, and to have it rightly directed. Or let a woman who has become a wife and a mother, without having learned the secret of self-denial, and who finds her joy in the pleasures of the world, awake to a higher call, when a beloved husband or child is struck with sore disease, and watch and struggle through sleepless days and nights, into which no thought of self

ever enters, will she not in after time, if unhappily no permanent mark remains in a new life of Christian self-sacrifice, confess that these dark and solitary hours shine out the brightest in her memory? Thus it is, that others are only lifted up transiently into this region; whereas the Christian, brought by redemption into the sphere of the eternal, into unity of aim with God, into sympathy with Jesus Christ, into appreciation of the unutterable worth of his own soul and the souls of others, has come into a region of love and faith and hope, where self-denial is congenial and abiding, where it tends ever to grow; and where its fruits are peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Thus it is that there is a permanent enlargement of nature; which goes out into the vast and the unseen, which welcomes conflict for truth, which encounters for God's glory and man's salvation the enemies of both, and exults in defeating them; which endures all things for the elect's sake, and counts not life itself dear, that the kingdom of Christ may be built up, and jewels added to His crown. This is the path of blessedness which Christ Himself trod, the path of apostles, confessors, and martyrs, who went singing through seas of blood and suffering to heaven—a blessedness which a luxurious, self-pleasing, soul-neglecting Church feels not, but which, the moment that the Spirit of God again breathes on it, returns in all its brightness, and attracts with irresistible charm the earnest, the self-devoting, the self-sacrificing in every branch of Christ's visible body, who then find His words to be true, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and that "whosoever will lose his life for His sake, the same shall find it." O that

such Christians were multiplied all around us, both for home work and for foreign service, men who, so far from complaining of effort and difficulty, would find in them the conditions of their highest reward, adding to the labours of the camp, more than a parallel to its light-heartedness and song, ready under such a Leader to go anywhere and do anything, and marching inflexibly onward to the hour when the last stronghold should fall, and the word be for the last time fulfilled: "Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread on their high places!"

§ 4. I remark, *fourthly*, and lastly, that ancient Israel was blessed, and the Christian Israel is blessed in the assurance of a *glorious inheritance*. The conquests of Israel became their own possessions. The warrior was turned into the colonist. The army of invasion was turned into a peaceful army of occupation, dispersed amidst the scenes of their exploits over hill and valley, sitting each under his vine and fig-tree with none to make him afraid. In the centre was the tabernacle of Jehovah; and the pillar which had led them to battle, and sent out its guiding light on their path, now diffused its mild and gracious beams over the abodes of rest and worship to the extremities of the land. Here was an emblem of the Christian Church translated to heaven, its militant state turned into its triumphant, and its faithful soldiers, each resting and standing in his lot in the end of the days. But how feeble and defective a figure after all are these "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood," of the heavenly Canaan! With the outward victory of Israel, redemption was still incomplete and waited for a higher stage; God was still distant, dwelling in one selected spot, and

leaving the rest in comparative shadow ; Canaan itself, the joy of all lands, might be deteriorated, as it has been, to sterility and barrenness ; and the people, thus divinely settled, might for their sins be rooted up and scattered among the nations ! What a contrast have we here to that inheritance, yet future, on which the hope of the Christian rests, and by which all the toils and conflicts of earth are to be crowned ! Redemption has now reached its limit. The Great Captain has come, and has led all faithful souls to the sky ! Heaven is itself the “end,” so long waited for, the glory no longer “to be revealed.” No more does God withdraw to any local centre, to any inner sanctuary even in the one chosen place. All heaven is His temple. “The tabernacle of God is with men ; and He will dwell with them ; and they shall be His people ; and God Himself shall be with them ; and be their God.” No possibility is there of this heavenly abode being wasted away and despoiled—as the earthly Canaan alas ! long has been,—for it is an “inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” ; far less that its heirs of glory should ever renounce their home, and provoke the author of their rest to disturb it ; for they serve Him day and night in His temple, where each of them is made a pillar, and shall go no more out ! Lift up your eyes, O Christian, to this divine inheritance, and say, if those who are begotten to it are not blessed indeed ! Looking to these stars of various rank as they shine above us, brought forth all out of darkness into that marvellous light, may we not say even to the least of them, “Who is like unto thee ?” True, we mourn them, when they depart, and exchange death and corruption for

life and immortality. But are they not rather to be envied than lamented? And what could we wish, had we the choice, more blessed for ourselves, than thus to depart and be with Christ, which is far better! We live too little in the light of a present eternity. Heaven is about us; and we see it not. Our feet are on the sands of Jordan; and we feel it not. Yet what were life to us, if this great perspective were abridged, or if the vista which opens upon the New Jerusalem were closed by the funeral monument or the cypress which overhangs the grave? No! We cannot accept the fate of annihilation to which some, even in the name of philosophy, would consign us, as they surrender themselves to it with a melancholy tranquillity, against which even reason itself rebels; nor can we be satisfied with the pale and flickering hope to which ancient sages rose, and to which our modern wisdom, that still looks for a future apart from Christ, has added little that is new. We cannot part with the "sure and certain hope" inspired by Him who has died to win and risen to seal our immortality. We cannot part with His words, because we cannot part with Himself, whose love is heaven; and therefore through darkness and through death we shall follow Him, with the breath of unextinguishable life in our hearts, and on our lips, "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

In conclusion, let me urge, that the blessedness of Israel, though guarded and defined, is not exclusive. The question "Who is like unto Thee?" does not indicate anything restricted and unattainable. Even in ancient days, the sons of the stranger

might come bending to take hold on Israel's God, and claim the blessings of His covenant ; and how much more in gospel times, when every wall of partition is broken down, and all, who see Christ with Abraham's faith, "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Yes ! my hearers, however far off you may have been, you may now be made nigh by the blood of Christ ! The true Israel, as we see it all around, is a body constantly recruited,—recruited from the ranks of its despisers, its assailants, and its foes ! The Church of to-day was the world of yesterday, even as it will be the general assembly of the first-born to-morrow. Its great and glorious Head invites you now to join it ; and He will separate you from your present allies, and from their destiny ; and when His conquering hosts march over all the high places that have in vain resisted, you will, not be trodden down, but led forth, redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled, to victory and endless rest !—*Amen.*

XI

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY: A TYPE OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?”—LUKE xxiv. 32.

THE fancy of poets and other writers who address themselves to the imagination, has often employed itself in surrounding great personages with a disguise, and then in weaving a tissue of incidents that should lead in an interesting and affecting manner to their recognition. Many of the tales and fictions thus constructed are highly captivating; and they are but the reflection of true history, which often thus invests its characters with an incognito, which after a crisis ends in a revelation. There are in the Bible two incidents of this kind, which stand out from all others whether in sacred or secular literature, exceeding them alike in the excitement of the crisis, and in the beauty and pathos of the narrative. One of these is in the Old Testament; the other is in the New. The one, is the story of Joseph and his Brethren; the other, the narrative of our Lord and His Disciples on the way to Emmaus. Each is in its kind perfect; but the New Testament example

is of more commanding and universal interest. It deals with One who is more to us than any figure of history, however pure and tender. It presents the risen Saviour in the first fresh glow of His resurrection life and glory, only veiled that He might be the better seen and known. It brings back the old familiar Jesus of the gospels, unlike all others in His ways, but with the same characteristic stamp of a wisdom and love all His own, risen with Him from the dead, and therefore showing forth themselves in Him. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing;" and here is the divine Saviour, like the risen sun, lovingly, almost playfully, losing Himself amidst the clouds of human grief and sorrow, that He might break through them and chase them for ever away! Beyond its charm as a mere story, beyond its importance as a contribution to the evidence of the resurrection, beyond its attraction as a display of the character of the Saviour, this narrative has what may be called a typical value. For it is a pattern of Christ's dealings with His people in all ages; and this journey to Emmaus is continually renewed, with something of the same gloom at the starting and gladness at the end. Sadness gathers; Christ approaches; sorrow flees at His word. He is recognised in the act of blessing, and the confession is drawn forth, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" It will be, dear brethren, to this typical character of the Emmaus journey, as an emblem and sample of what is constantly repeated in the history of His people, that I propose at this time, in dependence on Divine grace, to direct your attention.

In the *beginning*, in the *middle*, and in the *end* of the Christian pilgrimage, this word of the disciples is alike renewed.

I. I observe, *first*, that this experience belongs to the Christian life *at its beginning*. Never, indeed, can the experience of one who has never been a Christian at all quite resemble that of the two disciples. They had followed Jesus as a prophet, mighty in word and deed ; they had trusted Him as a Saviour ; they had loved Him as a friend. Their hearts were truly regenerated ; and had the name "Christian" then been in use, we should unhesitatingly have called these two disciples Christians. It was the shock to what was already Christian in their souls, given by our Lord's crucifixion and burial, that awoke their anguish, and overcast their faces with sorrow. In all this, those who have never followed Christ, or consciously loved Him at all, cannot, of course, be imaged. And yet, brethren, there is a point in the experience of all who become Christians, when they come into the footsteps of these grief-stricken disciples, and pass over the same ground. When in the sore struggle of the soul out of darkness, it first feels the need of redemption, not only from hell, but from sin, and catches a glimpse of Jesus as the Saviour, then the journey to Emmaus is entered upon. It is no longer mere terror, confusion, blind selfish eagerness to be saved from penalty. The soul can state its case to itself, or to other distressed souls that share its companionship and its sadness. How shall man be just with God ? How shall the yoke of sin be broken ? How shall there be a true redemption, that meets the deepest longings of man, and yet maintains the honour of

God? Jesus has been heard of, and has been so far inquired about by the soul that is in this anxiety. But is it all true? Has He the power that is ascribed to Him? Or if He has done a work for others, does it avail for us? Or is He not as good to us as dead and still in the grave? Thus, men in the beginning of the great struggle that makes them Christians, turn their backs upon Jerusalem, and go away from the Saviour's cross and sepulchre, with doubt still pictured on their faces, and with fear and sadness in their hearts. Whither are they going? They can hardly tell, and hardly know. They know only that they are deeply sinful and supremely miserable, afar from God and without a friend. To those who are thus casting their eyes downward, so that they will not look up to Him, or if they do, will not recognise Him, Christ draws nigh. He speaks to them by His word, and by that word He solves their doubts, dispels their fears, and fully conquers their hearts. He expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. He has not indeed always, as in the case of the two disciples, to remove contradictions between the prophecy and the fulfilment; for men are often now as ready to acknowledge in words a suffering Christ, as then they were to deny it. But He has always to remove the real difficulty, the opposition of the carnal heart, which makes men slow to believe in One who was despised and rejected, pierced and slain; and to do this He opens up more clearly the Scriptures that speak of sin, for every light that discloses sin's depths and dangers, discloses also His own suitableness and fulness. He meets the soul's doubt of His appointment to be the Saviour; and

to do this, He opens up the long array of consistent testimonies from Moses and the Prophets, all uniting to celebrate one great Deliverer, who, as He is above the thoughts of men, must needs be divine! He meets the soul's doubt of His ability or willingness to save; and to do this, He opens up the whole volume of Scripture and shows every page of it bedewed with His tears and marked with His blood. He thus meets the whole distempered and dejected mood in which men are in danger of going away from Him, for He shows them that their state is worse than they dreamt of, so that they cannot do without Him. He shows them that He is the very Christ of God to whom all the prophets give witness, the very Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and He shows them His atoning death illuminated by the glory of His resurrection, whereby He is now able to save to the uttermost, because He ever liveth to make intercession. Such are the blessed truths which Christ draws near to teach the awakened, but doubting and desponding soul. He answers all its questions, clears up all its perplexities, dissolves all its gloomy reserve, till as the heart thaws and melts and kindles in quick succession, He stands revealed in the blaze of His own light and love! Blessed experience this, in which the soul no longer regards Jesus as a stranger, but admits Him as a friend,—no longer reports the confused and chaotic impressions of others, but records its own clear knowledge and ardent conviction—"He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification,"—no longer goes away from Jerusalem, but hastens back to Jerusalem, to meet and to spread the resurrection-song, "The Lord is risen indeed!"

It is instructive, brethren, and it is cheering, to think of the ways in which, and of the persons to whom, the Lord Jesus thus draws nigh. Sometimes it is to the children of pious training, to whom the Scriptures have been familiar from infancy, only to remain after all sealed and dark, so that when the hand of Christ was laid upon them they have confessed that they were indeed fools and slow of heart; sometimes it is to the ragged outcast, to whom letter and spirit have come as alike new. Sometimes it is to the Scribe or Rabbi, whom Jesus meets in the temple; sometimes it is to the Publican, whom He draws from the receipt of custom. Sometimes the fire is kindled as in a conflagration, such as threatened to devour Saul on the way to Damascus; sometimes the smoking flax slowly burns as in the heart of an Apollos at Ephesus. Nor is it those alone, who have been outwardly near to Christ, in some Christian land, who are in our day thus stirred and enkindled. The Bushman of Africa, who has felt in his kraal some working of conscience, is first startled and then cheered by the light of Christ. The Brahmin leaves his transmigration to follow a risen Saviour. The Buddhist hears of a hell worse than his own, and cannot rest in a Nirvana but finds a Paradise. The Negro catches the word of deliverance, and thrills with a higher than mortal freedom. All over the world at this day the walk to Emmaus is reproduced in multitudes of inquirers; and its end is reached by those who have found peace in believing. Sorrow is the starting-point; gladness the goal; Christ the companion; His death and sacrifice and resurrection, the theme of discourse and the text of consolation! Say, brethren, is this to us no unknown

journey? Can we recall its stages and revive its recollections? Can we bless the day that saved us from days of darkness and months of vanity, from sorrow, from vacancy and blank despair, from life without an aim and a world without God, and gave us for the first time a faith whereby to live and a hope in which to die, a Saviour to love and a Father to confide in, a cross to cling to and a crown to win, with all the other spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in the first view of which as our blood-bought inheritance we could not but exclaim, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

II. I observe, *secondly*, that this experience belongs to *the middle of the Christian life*. It might seem as if the first scenes of Christian experience could never be repeated, nor the same path be retraced. Yet it is the fact that in one form or another, this pilgrimage of sadness renews itself, and forms all along a living commentary on this narrative. Not indeed that all Christians pass through the same regions of trouble and conflict; for here the differences are very great. But it may be confidently asserted that to all the hour of darkness recurs; and as they are now Christians and companions of Jesus, the parallel between them and these two disciples of Jesus is even more striking. Let me mention some of the forms in which this Emmaus journey may be renewed, alike after the Christian life has begun and even advanced.

§ 1. There is, *first, the trial of doubt and unbelief*. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that a Christian's faith is never rudely

assailed and shaken. It is against faith that the great adversary directs his principal attacks ; and the native doubtfulness of the human heart, coupled with the undeniable difficulties and mysteries of God's ways in redemption, as in other things, lends him much advantage. I speak not now of doubt and unbelief as to the question of the soul's right to rely on Jesus as the Saviour. I speak of the deeper doubt as to the whole gospel scheme, as to its leading doctrines, and as to the whole evidence on which it reposes. Was Jesus in very deed the Son of God? Did God so love the world as to give Him up, and yet leave millions upon millions without the knowledge of His name? Can Christ be reigning in heaven, while so little of His power is seen on earth ; and is He not rather still in the grave, so that the faith and hope of His people are vain? Such is a specimen of the doubts with which Christians are assailed ; and when, either through the subtlety of Satan or the deceitfulness of their own hearts, they give place to such misgivings, then are they thrown back into the position of the two disciples. I am far indeed from saying that Christians are not to re-examine the foundations of their faith, and to face every difficulty that rises on their path, with the earnest desire to know and hold the truth. This can only lead in the end to establishment ; and the very struggle roots the tree which it seems to shake. But in these workings of doubt, the tempter knows to fix the mind on what is dark and difficult, and to turn it away from what is bright and clear ; the heart naturally distrustful of God, lends itself too readily to the gloomy insinuations of the adversary ; and

perhaps God suffers this trial to become severe and even agonising, that the soul may not lightly boast of its own resources, but learn that faith, while the duty of man, is also the gift of God. All through the Christian Church the struggle with doubt is renewed ; sometimes falling upon many minds at once, sometimes disturbing individuals in the unknown depths of their solitude. So long as it lasts, it casts a mist and cold chill over the heart. The affections are paralysed. Prayer is restrained, or only sent forth in distracted cries for help. The arguments which convinced, convince no longer ; the doctrines which streamed with light and glory, sink into dark and colourless vapours. Redemption fades into dimness, and the very songs of heaven fall powerless on the ear. Am I not addressing some to whom these illapses of doubt are known, who have struggled till they seem to be conquered, who have groaned over salvation as a treasure all but lost, and Christ as a Saviour all but filched away, and who have said with Job, " Behold I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him ;" or with Asaph, " Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed mine hands in innocency " ? In the midst of this struggle, Christ himself draws near. He resumes His communing with the soul that had listened to other prompters. He talks with a power that reaches to the bottom of its doubts and agitations. Many are the voices in which He speaks. It may be by the arguments of a learned divine ; it may be by the prayers of a little child. It may be by the lesson of Christian living ; it may be by the example of the death-bed. It may be by a sudden flash of inward illumination ; it may be by contact with the

faith and love of others. Always, however, the Scriptures are the medium through which Christ talks ; and it is by opening them that the doubter is restored to faith and comfort. The plan of mercy which shines through them, breaks again upon the soul in all its grandeur, harmony, and suitableness ; and the whole is summed up in the question, " Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory ? " This is their best evidence ; for who but God could have carried through such a plan, from age to age, and grouped all around the cross ? Who could have imagined such a salvation or raised up so wonderful a Saviour, putting the treasure which He brings with Him into earthen vessels, a treasure which bears the very stamp of heaven ? And while the Scriptures are thus opened from within, they are confirmed from without. The rising Christ not only rolls away the stone and makes way for Himself in outward history ; but His resurrection works an inward and yet a visible change. With the Scriptures that tell of His victory He passes into human hearts and lives there. The doctrine creates the life, and the life seals the doctrine. Can a dead Christ quicken dead souls ? It is impossible ; and therefore as souls are all around raised from the dead, and have been for long centuries in His name, the living Church proves a living Christ ; the reflection in the water proves the sun in the sky ; and the soul which felt the shades of a dreary twilight creeping over it starts up and goes forth to rejoice in his beams ! Thus does Christ talk to the doubting soul, and that with such power that its gloom vanishes ; its faith returns with more than its former strength ; its difficulties are either fully swept away, or so reduced in force,

as to be only like stones in the current that ruffle its flow without impeding its progress, and onward it joyfully rushes to that glad eternity, where doubt and sin shall be alike forgotten and swallowed up for ever. Again, the Bible is luminous and the cross radiant! Again, the resurrection-song swells on earth, and echoes back from heaven! Again, the fire descends, with the shout, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God!" And the souls, whose doubts have thus been answered, and as it were consumed, bear witness, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

§ 2. I observe, that, *secondly*, there is the *trial of solitude and bereavement*. The two disciples felt that the world to them was cold and empty without the Saviour; that His grave covered their most precious hopes; and that no affections could ever bloom again, like those which had expanded and blossomed under His smile. They had not only lost a Saviour, but a Friend; and the vacant place in their hearts craved in vain for a supply. We can never be exactly in their position. The awful trial of having a Redeemer in the grave was limited to one generation. This flood of waters shall no more go over the earth, yet are there, in the history of Christians, still times when the Bridegroom seems to be taken away. These are times of bereavement, when not only our earthly resources are dried up, but our Christian joys and blessings are curtailed and diminished; when Christian parents, Christian ministers, Christian friends, who brought the Saviour nearer to us than every earthly presence, and in whom He seemed, as it were, to give us a sense of His own fellowship, are withdrawn.

Then are we again on the way to Emmaus, sad and solitary, or only communing with those who are equally stricken with ourselves, exchanging our regrets and our reasonings, which contain no cure, but rather an aggravation of our grief. Why have they been taken away, so loved, so useful, if aged, so venerable for their sanctity, if young, so engaging for their promise? Their death seems to darken not only earth but heaven, since Christ appears to love us less when He thus afflicts; yea, from the union between Christ and them, it is almost as if Christ Himself had lain down in their grave. The mind is depressed, if not staggered; it looks into a blank and ghastly future, like that which formed the horizon of the disciples, when leaving Jerusalem with a dead Christ in it, and wandering forth into vacancy. But into this solitude Christ descends. He draws nigh to debate the question with the sorrow-stricken heart, and to carry off the victory. Was it then better that the departed should live here alway, or enter into glory? Was it better that they should live here longer or be glorified more quickly? Is this your love to them, which you have so often protested, or to their Lord and yours, who desires them to be with Himself where He is? Could they enter into glory without suffering these things and you suffering with them? Did you then object to their being thus made perfect? Did you wish the Scriptures always to remain unfulfilled, and Christ's saints to long and pray for heaven in vain? If you saw Christ in their life, and loved them for this, can you not also see Christ in their death, and love them for this too? Christ is not with them in the grave; nay, rather Christ is with them risen again to

heaven, and your path, so far from being darkened with the shadow of death, is brightened afresh with the reflection of immortality! Soon (it is the Saviour who speaks!) they shall revisit you! your dead shall live; together with My dead body shall they arise! and meanwhile you dwell together in Me and in My love! Can that then be bereavement which gives you back the lost, crowned and immortal? Can that be solitude which draws you both nearer Me, and unites your spirits at My throne! Thus does Christ commune with the bereaved and desolate, rebuking their slowness of heart to believe that the dead are living, the absent present, the lost found, and so peopling the solitude that the heart is filled, while the embrace is empty, and the vacant hand is replenished with treasure! O may this joy be granted to all the bereaved, so that as life swallows up mortality, transfigures earthly fellowship into heavenly, and "gives us back the dead even in the loveliest looks they wore," we may say of that Saviour to whom all is due, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

§ 3. I shall mention only a *third* trial, that may come in the midst of the Christian life, or ere it ends, *that of backsliding and repentance*. We dare not say that the two disciples on the way to Emmaus suffered from this cause. They may indeed have been amongst those who forsook Jesus and fled; and if so, they would have been no worse than Peter and the rest of the apostles who were brought inwardly to grieve over that desertion. Let us suppose, however, that they had no share in that sin, and in the darkness which followed it; it is only too true, that many

who have loved Christ and companied with Him, fall by their backsliding into the same forlorn and comfortless state in which these disciples were found by Jesus. By some open sin or treachery of heart, these, it may be, once ardent disciples have put something between them and the living Christ, and now conviction awakes within them. They have crucified the Son of God afresh. They have cut themselves off from connection with Him as living and reigning to bless. For the time, He is no more to them than as one dead and in the grave. Whither then shall they turn for mercy and pardoning grace? Nothing is left them but to quit Jerusalem, to forsake the company of the disciples, and give up all hope of redemption from Him to whom they once looked as the Redeemer of Israel! Thus, it may be in company, but more frequently alone, the backslider goes forth upon his sorrowful way, wrung with remorse, and yet a stranger to penitence, because he thinks his day of grace gone, and his sun about to set in darkness. It is to such an one, that Jesus in all the fulness of His resurrection power draws nigh. He speaks by His word; He speaks by His Spirit. He combats the suggestions of unbelief; He soothes the dull cold ear of despair. He reveals the efficacy of His sufferings, according to the Scriptures. He urges the truth of His resurrection, according to the Scriptures. He dwells on the glory into which He has entered, as a proof of His power to save even to the uttermost. He appeals to the desponding soul whether its sins be faster than the bands of death, or more deeply riveted than the fetters of hell, which He has burst asunder. He brings back the offer of pardon which the soul had put away, and renews the glorious truth

as applicable to the chief of sinners, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Then the soul yields, its dejection is turned into cheerfulness, its desperation into lively hope. It welcomes back the Saviour whom it had repulsed. It constrains Him to come in ; and over the bread which is broken, and the cup which is blessed, its covenant with Him is sealed unalterably, and Jerusalem is again its home and resting-place. Brethren, have any of you experienced this attraction of a Saviour's voice, seeking you out when none was near, and saving you when you had destroyed yourself? Can you enter into these words as descriptive of a true history :—

"I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew,
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One, who had Himself
Been hurt by the archers ; in His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars ;
With gentle force, soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live."¹

Those to whom Christ has thus drawn near, to fill them with joy, a joy all the more grateful, that it is truly like life from the dead, will fervently repeat the words of wonder and of love, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

III. While such experiences as I have described belong to the Christian life in its beginning, and

¹ Cowper's *Task*, book iii. 108-116.

middle stages, I have now, *thirdly*, to add, that they belong to the Christian life *at its end*. The last Emmaus journey of the Christian lies through the valley of the Shadow of Death. Clouds and darkness may here surround him as he enters. The prayer for recovery and length of days may be unheard, though offered with strong crying and tears. Christ may thus seem absent, powerless, entombed. Something of disappointment may wound, something of distrust may agitate, something of strange awe and fear may appal. The lamp of faith may burn dimly, and hardly cast its feeble rays athwart the valley, lighting up only the judgment seat at the end, but leaving in shade the glorious Paradise beyond. Still the pilgrim must enter, with or without companionship, walking and being sad. But he has not gone far, before it is as if a Stranger had joined him, of bright mien and firm step, familiar too with the way, and moving calmly in the gathering darkness. A gentle voice accosts the pilgrim, draws forth his tale of disappointment; and then in tender strain as if half chiding, half instructing, repeats the words of a book he has forgotten. One by one they are recalled, each waking an echo, as they speak of death and of its conqueror, of death as the wages of sin, of Him who died that the sinner might live, and who comes again to lead through death to immortality. A secret joy springs up at every word, and again he knows in whom he has believed. The pilgrim quickens his step, but the Stranger is still with him, drawing closer as the darkness thickens, upholding him with His arm, and whispering the now well-remembered words in his ear. Joy kindles, even into song, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me ! ” Suddenly a light falls on both, a light from the farther end, and as it reveals the Stranger, it shows the one hand around the pilgrim and the other lifted up to welcome and bless him ; and behold both hands are scarred with suffering ; and hardly has the traveller, who sees in whose company he passed over, time to say, “ Thanks be to Him who giveth me the victory ! ” when both vanish and are lost in the blaze of glory. Let something like this, however rudely and feebly sketched, be our experience, dear brethren, in that last earthly journey ; and then, shall we not say, in the hearing of all the companions of our pilgrimage, and in the presence too of Him who has revealed Himself, not to disappear, but to abide for ever, and with the glow of heaven fresh in our immortal being, “ Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures ? ”

Let me close by a few practical lessons as to how this Christian joy and gladness are to be brought into the soul. Not indeed that we can command this manifestation ; for while Christ gives all His people peace, He gives them not all this lively and ardent joy ; at least gives it not as a constant possession. Here the wind must blow as it listeth, and the risen Saviour come like the gleam of the sunshine, or as the dew “ that tarrieth not for man.”

First, then, let us seek this blessing *in company*. Grief flies into solitude and broods over its cares. The convicted, the troubled, the bereaved, all seek to be alone. And truly there is work to be done there which demands seclusion. But Christ will not be found,

if the soul shuts itself up in morbid isolation, and incessantly renews its own distresses. We must come into contact with the hearts of our brethren, smitten it may be by the same blow, and ready to share and to divide our sadness. We must seek relief in fellowship. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but come into the Sanctuary. While we reason, He will draw near to explain. Our hearts will be relieved even by joint lamentation in His presence, and as we have been first united in sorrow and sighing, He will at last unite us in praise ; and we shall together "return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads."

Secondly, let us seek this blessing *through the Scriptures*. There is a grief indeed, which springs from knowing the Scriptures and keeping them ever in mind. It is the grief of true repentance, the godly sorrow which is but another form of love to God, the mourning of our inmost heart for Him who was pierced and slain for us, and by our sins. This sorrow Christ will not come to cure, but only to increase ; for to this the word applies, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." But O what other griefs and cares do we blindly cherish and nurse simply through our ignorance of the Word of God ! Why these fears of guilt ?—why these murmurings under trouble ?—why these shrinkings from death ? Why do we so often say, "All these things are against me," when they are indeed for us ; when by them Christ is actually fulfilling His own word, and coming near to work out our salvation ? Let us return to those Scriptures which are His own, assured that we shall meet Him there,—not silent but having a word in season,—not willing that we should perish,

but waiting to save us,—not dead and in the grave, but alive for evermore, and having the keys of hell and of death. We cannot, indeed, make Scripture bright, or evoke its gladness. The fault is ours ; for the veil is on our hearts. But when we shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. His hand shall lift it up ; and then it shall be, as when the sun goeth forth from one end to another of the once darkened sky, and nothing is hid from the heat thereof ! Happy those who thus wait for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning ! Happy those who hail the first kindling ray, “ Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ! ”

. *Thirdly*, Let us seek this blessing *at the Communion Table*. Not here, indeed, is trouble of conscience first to be healed, or the gloom of the soul, on which Christ breaks, first to be rolled away ! Not at the Communion Table, but at the cross, must thou, O sinner, first seek and find Him ! Not over the memorials of His body and blood, but over that broken body and shed blood themselves ! If otherwise thou constrainest Him, even by setting bread and wine before Him, He will not be constrained ; He will vanish without word of blessing or sign of recognition ! But, do thou, O Christian, who though a sad and doubting disciple, still lovest thy Lord, and hast not given up thy trust that He shall redeem Israel, who canst say, Lord, Whither shall I go, even in the grave Thou wert dearer to me than all besides ?—whose very doubts, fears, sorrows, in their worst darkness, are still tinged with the hues of faith, and tremble with the glow of unextinguished affection, come hither in all thy weakness, in all thy

sadness, in all thy slowness of heart to believe, thine eye upon the opened Scriptures, thine hand upon the memorials of a dying love, taken, blessed, and broken for thee ; and as thou eatest of that bread and drinkest of that cup, He who sups with thee and makes thee sup with Him, shall stand revealed, fairer, lovelier, heavenlier than before, lifting on thee a countenance without a cloud, and making all thy grief give place to joy unspeakable and full of glory ! Then shall thy pilgrimage of sadness end ! Then shalt thou know, having followed on to know the Lord ! and this shall be thy glad and grateful song—

“ I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend !
Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end :
Thy mercies never shall remove ;
Thy nature and Thy name is love ! ”

Amen.

XII

CLAIMS OF FOREIGN MISSIONS ON BRITAIN

“This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.”—ISAIAH xliiii. 21.

THESE words may be applied to the Christian Church as God's peculiar people; and doubtless this is their most natural signification. But it seems to me allowable to accommodate them to the destiny of individual nations, as raised up to perform each a special work for the Kingdom of God. Every nation is a divine creation or production, as much as every individual; and the last end of its existence is the glory of God. It is unspeakably desirable, therefore, that every nation should understand this destiny and should fulfil it; and as our own nation is that with which we have most to do, it is most important of all, that, in this matter, we should understand our own duties to the Saviour's cause. Among these duties the advancement of Christian missions is one which stands out most prominently; and therefore, on this missionary anniversary, I shall occupy our usual discourse with a statement of the claims of missions specially upon Britain. The subject is too

wide to be treated in any other way than by passing hints and allusions ; but these, by the blessing of God, may be useful and may suggest matter for further reflection and inquiry. May the Spirit of God, then, on whom the whole missionary enterprise depends, enable us at this time, so to consider the subject together that we may see, as perhaps not before, in what ways our own country has been so formed by God for Himself, as to be specially bound to show forth His praise.

I. I remark then, *first*, that the missionary cause has a special claim on our nation, *because it is itself so much indebted to missions*. Our ancestors, as we all know, about 1900 years ago, were painted savages, not much higher, if higher at all, in the scale, than the Red Indians of America, or the Caffre tribes of South Africa, or the aborigines of New Zealand. Some have believed, especially in regard to the natives of North Britain, that they were cannibals, like the islanders of the South Seas. Be this as it may, it is certain that they were sunk in the most degrading and ferocious superstition. Julius Cæsar, who first invaded Britain (55 B.C.), tells us, that the Druid priests of our forefathers used human sacrifices, because they did not believe that the life of man could be redeemed, save by human blood ; and he says in another place, that they had immense wicker images of their gods, the cavities of which they filled up with living victims, after which they set the whole on fire, sacrificing by preference, criminals in this way, but when these failed, also innocent persons.¹ So also Tacitus, who wrote in the time of

¹ Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, vi. sec. 16. Cæsar speaks of Gaul, but says that these rites were derived from Britain.

the apostle John, tells us, in his account of the worship in *Mona* or the isle of Anglesey, that "the groves were sacred to bloody superstitions, for they were wont to make their altars smoke with the blood of captives, and to divine the future by the use of human entrails" (Tacit. *Annal.* xiv. 30). How immense the change effected since the days of Cæsar and Tacitus! The very seats of Druid superstition and barbarism are now among the most striking monuments of civilisation and Christianity. The whole island of *Mona* is a memorial of engineering skill; the whole principality of Wales is more thickly covered with Christian Churches than any other part of Great Britain, and over innumerable other spots from the south to the north of our whole country, where Druid altars smoked in the gloom of impenetrable forests, and painted barbarians danced around the sacrifice, there now rise throughout the week the busy hum of active, happy industry, serving the whole world with its useful toil, and on the Christian Sabbath the melody of a cheerful and bloodless worship to the God of salvation! How has this change been effected? Tell us, ye despisers of missions, and doubters of the power of Christian truth, to reclaim the savage, and build up the wastes of many generations! We do not claim for the gospel alone the mighty transformation. We will ascribe something even to the civilised paganism of Rome. We will give the Saxon, the Dane, the Norman each his due. We will acknowledge the valour of captains, the wisdom of law-makers, the enterprise of merchants and chiefs of industry. But take away Christianity, and that too, an imported Christianity, first in converting the original Celtic

racés, and then in re-converting the Saxon and other Pagan or semi-Pagan invaders, and where would our whole history be at this day? The labours of early missionaries contemporary with the apostle Paul; the labours of the Culdees at a later period; the labours even of emissaries from Rome, when Rome was still comparatively incorrupt, and yet united missionary zeal with more of early Christianity, these were employed by God, in supplanting the dark and hateful rites of Druidical and Saxon idolatry, and a way was opened for the brighter ages that were to come. Even at the Reformation period, our purer Christianity came from without. The influence of Wyckliffe is not unreasonably connected with the teaching of the Waldenses; and in the days of Luther and Calvin, not only did their mighty impulse act with much of a missionary character; but some of the English Reformers themselves, like Martin Bucer, and Peter Martyr, labouring the one in Cambridge and the other in Oxford, were from other lands. Our Christian history, therefore, is a witness for missions; and if God has so brought forth these fruits among us, and thus formed us for Himself, is it not, that on the mission field we should show forth His praise? A story is current which may or may not be true; but which on either supposition is instructive. It is to this effect, that one of our most eminent literary men was expressing doubts of the success of our modern missions, when his pious mother silenced him by pointing him back to the Druids. A similar anecdote was mentioned in the course of this winter, in a very interesting address by Earl Russell to the University of Aberdeen.¹ He

¹ This sermon was written in 1865.

related a remarkable circumstance, in the later years of the Rev. Sydney Smith, author of the celebrated article on missions in the *Edinburgh Review*, near the commencement of its career. The writer had changed his opinion ; for at the time of the Niger Expedition, which he lived to see, when some one in a distinguished company was speaking disparagingly of the Expedition, and of the Christianisation of Africa, the Rev. Sydney Smith, as if recanting his earlier scepticism as to missions, made this decisive reply : “ This may all sound very well ; but it is very like the speech of a Roman Senator in the first century, proving it impossible ever to reclaim the naked and painted Britons ! ” Such are the tributes which the missionary cause by its native truth and justice draws forth even from those who once opposed it ; and surely the more that as a people, we feel our obligations to the gospel, the more are we bound to diffuse it ; the more are the children of missions bound in turn to become the parents of missions, and to act on the rule, “ Freely ye have received, freely give.”

II. I remark, *secondly*, that the missionary cause has a special claim on our nation *from its special opportunities for missions*. There are *three* particulars in which our nation leaves all others behind, —the extent of its commerce—the greatness of its colonies—and the vastness of its conquests. Each of these facts supplies a powerful argument for missions. It is calculated that the shipping of Britain is about the half of that of the whole world ; and it is continually on the increase. We touch every part of the world by our ships ; from Greenland to Tierra del Fuego ; from Japan to the mouth

of the Niger ; and surely these ships ought to bear not only the agents of commerce, but the messengers of salvation, not only the wares of earth, but the bread of life that came down from heaven. It is often made a reproach that we send out in the same vessel the Bible and the rum-cask ; how much worse, if we send only the destructive article, and nothing to counteract it ; and if on many a shore Britain is as yet hardly known by the feet of them that bring good tidings ? Happily a closer and ever closer alliance is being formed between commerce and Christian missions, as in the last discovered regions of Africa ; and even in older seats of missionary labour, commerce is finding new fields, as in the South Seas, through the civilising effects of the gospel ! May this happy alliance be promoted, so as to assist in opening new doors, to make the abundance of the sea tributary to Christ !

The same obligation arises from the possession and development of our colonies. These are without parallel in history, reducing the colonies of ancient Greece, wonderful as they were, to comparative smallness, being found in every region of the globe, and rising rapidly to the dimension of empires. These immense colonial possessions are occupied by millions sprung from the same stock with ourselves ; and though many of these, as our Canadian Dominion, the Cape Colony, and Australia and New Zealand, not only supply their own spiritual wants, but assist the common missionary enterprise, there are other and great colonies, like those recently acquired in Africa, that still require help and succour ; while all over our colonial field, or on the borders of it, there are other races, whose difference

in blood represents the saddest difference and destitution in respect of religion. What a claim arises for the native races in every colony, as thus incorporated so far with our own great family, and entitled to receive the treasures of grace as a portion of the family inheritance! And here too comes in the argument from conquest, where not only colonies have been subjected, but great dependencies, that we are not wont to call colonies, have been opened to the same influence. The double claim applies to races like the Caffres in South Africa, the negro race in all our colonies, and the native tribes of Australia and New Zealand. But what mighty fields have been opened for us by conquest, where we do not speak of colonisation, as among the 230,000,000 of India now directly obeying a British sovereign! I might plead on the ground of the injuries we have done them, and the wrongs that we have inflicted, at least on some of them; though I believe that, on the whole, it has been better for them that God has placed them under British rule; and there can be no doubt, that the liberty, the justice, and the fairness of their present government are largely to be ascribed to the presence, the sympathy, and the advocacy of missionaries. I am willing here, however, to forget the past, or any questions of natural right or social benefit which it may raise, and I now plead for missions amongst these races on the ground of opportunity, which their relation to this country so wonderfully supplies. What nation ever had such opportunities? Happily now (for it was not so always), we go out, say to India, and for thousands of miles, we need ask no man's leave to ascend a river, or cross a pathway, or collect a crowd in a

village, or open a school, or form a congregation. We have the most unrestrained access, the most absolute liberty, the most assured protection in our blessed work. There are indications, that through our freedom in dealing with the forty millions of Mohammedans in India, Islam will fall there sooner than in any part of the world. Everywhere we find our own Christian countrymen, ready to co-operate with us, and as experience has shown, to lend a more effectual help than was probably ever enjoyed before, in the Christianising of a Pagan or Mohammedan country. We deeply lament that British influence of a certain kind has done much to hinder and to stunt the growth of missions, not only in India, but in all the world. But let us not forget British influences of another kind, habits and usages that prepare for Christianity, in the spirit of British law, and truth, and justice, and above all, our English tongue, which goes everywhere as the pioneer of Christianity, and heralds while it helps its conquests. Nowhere has France or even Germany such an ally. English is the language of the missionary world; and nobly is our mother tongue repaid by the tide of intelligence and moral impulse from every mission field, which keeps it in Britain and America purer than it otherwise would be. Would that the whole English-speaking world might awake more and more to these responsibilities, so as to lay out every talent to the best usury, and sow beside all waters the precious seed of life eternal!

III. I remark, *thirdly*, that the missionary cause has a special claim on our nation, *because our prosperity in the best sense has grown with our interest in missions*. It can be shown at every step that the

progress of our nation has coincided with our devotion at different periods to the cause of God. The Reformation lifted us into a position of grandeur and influence in Europe, such as we never enjoyed before under our greatest monarchs. So also the great Puritan struggle brought out the noblest qualities of our people, and commanded during the Protectorate the homage of the world. The rescue of our religious liberties by the Revolution was followed by the most extended sway and the most ample commercial progress that our nation had ever known. The gradual advance of unbelief and decay of religion in last century reflect themselves in the many serious trials and grave humiliations of that chequered age, in which, though much that helped the nation forward was found, still the cup of bitterness was once and again drained to the dregs. May we not date an improved standard of public honour and national advancement from the time that our great missionary and philanthropic career began? When at the time of the great French Revolution our country took its stand on the side of the Bible, and lent itself to such enterprises as the propagation of Christianity, the liberation of the slave, and the improvement of national education, were we not enabled to weather that great storm, and to come forth, though bleeding and exhausted, yet stronger in power and influence than ever before? And has not our country in the last seventy or eighty years, during all which time, though with some fluctuations, practical effort in the spread of the gospel has deepened and increased, in proportion as she has identified herself with the cause of God, risen in every element of the best prosperity, so that the

record in any equal period may be said to be unexampled? Our institutions are in many respects more free; our people are more contented; our resources are more vast, as measured even by the test of our public taxation; our whole social and economical state, notwithstanding much that remains to be redressed, is more satisfactory than at any former day! What then do we learn from this but the great lesson that in seeking to bless others, we are blessed ourselves, and that if we follow righteousness as a people, by righteousness we are exalted? Foreign Missions have given an impulse to Home Missions, with their manifold recovering and elevating influences; and in seeking to evangelise the heathen, we have taken the shortest road to evangelise Britain itself, and to take away its worst reproach of ungodliness with resulting impurity and intemperance. Which are the Churches at home that are at this day most prosperous and useful? Are they not those that have in them most of the missionary spirit? And are not the localities where this spirit is found to flourish most, themselves the most flourishing and enterprising in the empire? Let us suppose a whole community actively devoted to the cause of missions! Is it conceivable that such a community would lag behind in any department of social and intellectual culture?—in any principle that was virtuous and lovely and of good report? This may seem a selfish ground on which to argue for missions in a nation, and a community; but it is not selfish in any degrading sense of the term. There is a school of writers, themselves not always favourable to the essence of the gospel or the diffusion of its spirit, who, drawing an

unphilosophical distinction between self-regard, and altruism, as they call regard for others, would exclude as selfish, every just regard for our own welfare, moral or otherwise, as if the man could value the true welfare of others, who had no regard for his own ; or should disregard at the call of virtue, that which is virtue's own reward. This principle of regard for our own highest welfare is constantly appealed to in Scripture, because God knows the extent of its influence, and wishes to draw us by His promises to true blessedness. Hence, it is said, "Them that honour Me, I will honour," "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you." If we value our own highest good, we shall be found here on the Lord's side. Other nations have fallen, because they did not, in this respect, know "the time of their visitation." Portugal was once the leading commercial nation. She used her greatness only for gain and selfishness ; and has long fallen into the rear. Spain came next into the van ; but used her empire only to plunder the New World, or requite its riches by the miserable poverty of debasing superstition ; and soon her glory departed. Holland succeeded ; but though founded on religion and cemented by martyr-blood, she strangely forgot her mission to the heathen, and left no mark upon them. Our turn has come, and we are still upon our trial. God grant that our hour do not in like manner pass away. The temple is to be built ; but God chooses His own workmen ; and if we are ungrateful and unfaithful, the sublime honour of rearing it to its copestone, and of dedicating it when finished may be reserved for some other people. Happy shall we

be if, whatever kingdom we are come to, we thus meet its call, and encouraged by the tokens of the past, and the signs of the future, gird ourselves to the work, saying, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us ; therefore we His servants will arise and build."

IV. In the *fourth* and last place, I remark, that the missionary cause has a special claim upon our nation, *from its own past professions and operations*. Nowhere has the missionary cause been, as yet, so taken up as in our own country. If there be an exception, it is in America, which is but an offshoot, and extension of ourselves. No doubt other nations have done much ; Germany, whose Moravian vanguard has been missionary from its beginning, and whose other Churches have supplied noble labourers even to other Christian lands ; France, whose Protestant Churches have not only striven to dispel the dense darkness at home, but the gloom of Pagan night in India and Africa ; Switzerland, whose sons have gone forth from Basle and Geneva, like streams of living light ; Holland, which in these last days has repaired the omissions of former centuries, in raising up men, like Vanderkemp, of the purest lustre ; and, not least, the Scandinavian regions, which have followed up the memorable labours of Schwartz, a century ago, in India, by sending forth men like Skrefroud and Boeressen in our own day to evangelise the aboriginal races there. These and many other works of sister lands and Churches we gladly record. But where, after all, have missions become such an institution as in our own beloved country ? Where have so many families supplied devoted and self-denying men and women for the

work? Or where have such regular and solemn festivals of missionary gladness and jubilee found a home? Is not all this a special claim for the future? Shall we recall our agents while their work is only half done? Shall we break up our missionary organisations, discontinue our annual missionary services, and write over the whole enterprise: "Britain is weary of it! Her Churches repent of it! The time is not come—the time for the Lord's house to be built!" O how would the Church be discredited by such a proceeding before an ungodly world! How would British Christians be abashed before those of other Christian lands, and even before the converts whom they had helped to gather! And how would God write confusion on our unbelief by raising up some three hundred elsewhere, to win the victory, from which our thousands and tens of thousands had recoiled as too great for them! Blessed be God there is no reason to fear any such unfaithfulness of British Christians to their vows and pledges, any such insensibility to the signs of the times, or ingratitude for what God has wrought for them! Rather we may hope that large profession may be followed by yet more liberal performance, and that when God is proved herewith, a blessing shall be poured out, even beyond what there is room enough to receive!

I have spoken much of our obligations and duties as a nation. But let it never be forgotten that Christianity is something personal and individual! I cannot ask this audience to take part in missions ere they are first evangelised themselves. The blind cannot lead the blind here, more than in any other department. Are you then, my hearers, yourselves

formed for God and for Christ? Have you been born again, and made Christ's workmanship, created unto this, and every other, good work? O refuse not this searching question, nor take the answer to it, too lightly for granted. Those alone can pray and work, and give in this field, whose hearts are disburdened of guilt, purged from sin, and made to overflow with love and praise! Those alone can teach the nations to praise, who have themselves begun the everlasting song! May this then, through faith and repentance, be our happy attainment; and then we shall echo the cry, and would to God that all Britain re-echoed it with us to the ends of the earth! "O praise the Lord, all ye nations, praise Him, all ye people; for His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever! Praise ye the Lord!"—*Amen.*

XIII

CHRIST'S RETROSPECT OF HIS WORK ON EARTH

"I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do,"—JOHN xvii. 4.

NO worker on the scene of time ever left it so grandly, or with such words of farewell. Christ never looked greater than in the upper chamber, when thus taking leave of His disciples. He is about to exchange one sphere of companionship for another—one field of action for another—in a sense peculiar to Himself, one world for another. But there is still a point of comparison between Himself and His people. In the most solemn moments—in the most tender and pathetic interviews ; when the last word is spoken, when the fullest effusion of heart has taken place, communion with man rises to prayer to God ; and thus this wonderful discourse, true to the deepest workings of the soul, because the reflection of the most divine reality, represents the Saviour of the world, as ending it by lifting up His eyes to heaven, and addressing the most blessed words of all, not to man, but to God. We here enter the sanctuary of the universe. The counsels

of eternity overshadow the events of time. Christ shows us His sense of the greatness of these apostles, notwithstanding all their weakness, as He could not in speaking directly to themselves. He shows even more of His love for them, and His care towards them, and all who were to take up their work to the end. And as He thus reveals His deepest heart towards them, so also, as it were unconsciously, His deepest consciousness towards Himself, as their Saviour, Guardian, and Friend, the Author of eternal life to them, and to all whom He should undertake to keep through His name. The safety of the Church thus rests (it is seen in this outpouring to God!) in the proved, the everlasting sufficiency of its Lord and Head: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee—the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Here we have *Christ's Retrospect of His own Work*; and we may say, that we have also the feelings which attend it. Let us, in humble dependence on Divine help, consider this great and lofty subject. The well is deep; and yet through grace we may draw some water out of this well of salvation.

I. Let us look, *first*, at Christ's retrospect of His own work, and it is evident that Christ regards that earthly work on two sides, *first*, in relation to the *Divine glory*: "I have glorified Thee on the earth," and then, *secondly*, in relation to the *Divine will*: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

§ 1. *First*, then, let us study Christ's retrospect of His work, as it stood related to the divine glory.

Sometimes, it is said, that one gains a better view of life, as it reaches its end. It comes up with greater unity and fulness of meaning. Parts that seemed dark, become bright with purpose, and are no longer broken off, but caught up into the plan of the whole in life's last view. Dare we say that anything like this happened to Christ, and that He too shared in the illuminating power of a last retrospect? We dare not if we mean, that there were limitations or errors in His anticipation, which an advancing experience was needed to correct. But we may, if we mean, that to Him the future, when it became past, opened out new treasures of discovery, and that as God's Incarnate Son, even He learned by the things which He suffered, as well as did. His life was fuller, more developed, more pregnant to His own consciousness with divine reality at the end, than at the beginning. How are we to think of this in relation to His work, as all along subservient to the divine glory? Here Christ stands alone. A holy man, or an unfallen angel, glorifies God. But Christ came forth to make a special manifestation of the glory of God in the face of sin, which is the denial and the obscurization of the divine glory. He stood up—the God-Man in this fallen world—to vindicate the divine glory, and thus recover lost sinners to God. It is to this transcendent aim that He here refers; and the question is, How did He thus glorify God on the earth? I do not think that a better answer to this ever has been given, or ever will be given, than that Christ glorified God as Mediator and Redeemer by the *fulfilment of His offices*. To these, He was from all eternity called; for these, by His Incarnation and

the work of the Holy Ghost, He was qualified ; and these He had, as far as it was possible or needful, fully discharged in His earthly ministry. How great and wonderful was *His so-called prophetic office* ! It was not merely to reveal in word, something, nay much, about God. It was to reveal God, by being God, and thus manifesting forth His glory. It was to bring out every attribute of God, in its full brightness in turn upon the darkened surface which a fallen world presented, and specially the light of God's moral and spiritual glory in awful purity, and yet more entrancing love. It was so to go round and through this manifestation, that in the end, lost sinners might say, " Here is the true God once more, and more glorious than ever ! This *is* the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ! " Here then Christ stands to declare this lesson taught, this revelation made ! Nothing was wanting, nothing in excess, nothing out of harmony with the rest—God was seen by His own beams albeit through a human medium ; and men beholding this glory might and would be " changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ! " How astonishing *was the priestly office in which also Jesus had glorified God*. He takes for granted His death on Calvary with its atoning issues. But all through Jesus had been a priest ; and this essential, sublime, infinitely far-reaching work could be regarded as finished ! It was not merely in the sufferings of Jesus. It was in the honour which His whole work put upon the law. The law stood out in all its grandeur in the perfect life of Jesus as holy, just, and good. And then when He had thus put honour

upon it by fulfilling all righteousness, and thus, as the second Adam, repairing the whole breach of the covenant by the first, He glorified God, as the Righteous Judge, who will by no means clear the guilty, by meekly bowing His head to the stroke and curse which sin had deserved, and in the sinner's room, bearing the iniquity of us all ! This great, mighty, sin-atonement, world-redeeming transaction stands alone in its priestly value and God-glorifying efficacy. Other offerings had only an outward relation to law, and not an inward. They could predict a Priest, but could not show or make one. Here once, in the end of the world, the Priest is revealed, constituted, and enthroned upon His own altar and by His own sacrifice, and is become Himself the way whereby alone we draw near to God ! How glorious, once more, is *the kingly office of Jesus, as allied with the rest, and as equally glorifying to God !* Though the prophetic lesson be complete, a divine energy is needed to work it into faith and life. Though the atonement and righteousness be provided, the will to return by this new and living way to God and serve Him, remains a *desideratum* yet to be supplied. Hence the kingly office of Jesus, which links itself on through His continued life and intercession with the gathering of His people and the founding of His kingdom. And thus it was, that in the Old Testament as the last of all, that to which all else tended, and in which all else was applied, this office held so great a place, and the Saviour was revealed as the Son of God, and the King of Israel. But here Jesus claims these honours. He had done everything to grasp them and to employ them for men's salvation. He had already begun His saving work in not a

few trophies that foreshadowed the glories of His dominion; and therefore in His kingly work he asserts the glory of God fulfilled, and as in His other offices, re-echoes the last result of His life-long ministry, the issue with which angels had heralded His birth: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men!"

§ 2. We have now to speak of Christ's retrospect of His work, as it *stood related to the divine will*. "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Times without number Christ speaks as a servant, as one sent to work, having a commandment to keep, and a will to do, in which His own was lost and swallowed up, even as He said, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). This language has created much difficulty; and even by those who admit our Lord's higher nature, it has been supposed to mean no more than that in His lower nature Jesus was the Father's servant. Now there can be no doubt, that our Lord thus speaks of other things from the point of view of His human nature. Thus when he says, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," or, "The Son of Man must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," the thing affirmed can only apply to our Lord's humanity. So it has been supposed, that our Lord's working, obeying, serving, is to be explained on this principle. But I do not think that this will cover the facts. It was not our Lord's humanity only that worked. Thus He vindicates His working on the Sabbath, by His equality with God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The personality of Christ is thus connected with His working;

and if with His working, with His serving and obeying. And thus I think we must bring in our Lord's higher nature, as concerned in this whole series of acts by a voluntary subordination and humiliation, which, without abridging any of the attributes of His Deity, placed all of them in the work of mediation, in union with the human perfections of Jesus, at the service of the Godhead, so that there was no recoil or shrinking from the act of Incarnation, and all that needed to follow ere sin was atoned for and the world redeemed. We thus require to take the doctrine of the Trinity in a very real sense, so that the eternal Word became a messenger, a worker, a servant in the carrying out of an everlasting counsel; but when this is conceded, light comes into many an otherwise dark passage of Holy Scripture; and we do not wonder that the work is finished. For how should omnipotence fail, or that great personality, which, though humbling itself in real assumption of humanity, is backed by all divine resources, stop short of fulfilling all righteousness? It is thus that the work of Jesus is able to come to the world's aid, because it is connected with the everlasting throne. The lesson of obedience is effectually taught, when God becomes obedient in this mystery of godliness to an eternal law; and the efficacy of atonement becomes invincible, when He who is crucified for sin is the Lord of glory! Not as alone then, does the human will of Jesus here stand, but as the counterpart and organ of Deity. Whatever will could reach, in its mighty sweep, it had achieved and done, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do!"

II. Thus far I have considered our Lord's retro-

spect of His own work, as involving special *thoughts* or elements of knowledge : but here, as everywhere else in our Lord's history, thought or knowledge is coloured and suffused by sentiment or feeling ; and as the thoughts are so mighty and far-reaching, so the feelings, in a natural correspondence, are of the deepest, the most intense, and the most affecting character. Nowhere have we a more wonderful view opened up of the very heart of Jesus—of the emotions and sympathies, with which he regarded His own work on the eve of its completion. I venture to think that the special and characteristic feelings here expressed are those of *approbation*, of *thankfulness*, and of *hope*. Let us illustrate these in their order.

§ 1. And *first*, our Lord regarded His finished work with feelings of *approbation*. It is impossible not to be profoundly struck here with the entire absence of regret or censure, nay, with the presence of absolute and unmingled self-approval, "I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Christ had set up the highest standard before others, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Is He then become a more indulgent critic of Himself? Or has He fallen into the error of supposing that because His standard is high, therefore a lax application of it can be excused? Those who regard Jesus only as an elevated moral teacher, but not a perfect one, are here put to the greatest difficulty. His language goes entirely against their scheme. For the better any good man, the more is he alive to any remaining defects in his character, and the more faithfully does he acknowledge them

alike to man and to God. Why then is Jesus—if here only an eminent example of goodness, but not a sinless one—so self-satisfied? Why does He speak, so as to mislead others and even to blind Himself? There is no answer to these questions, on the supposition that Jesus is in the least degree imperfect; and therefore we take the words, as a solemn declaration, in the face of death, of His own absolute perfection. In looking back on His whole public career, nay on His whole existence on the earth, He had never once, in thought, word, or deed, fallen below what the divine glory demanded. Nothing had been wanting, nothing wrong from the first moment to the last. In His life, His doctrines, His miracles, His sufferings, in His intercourse with friends and foes, with His disciples in His most private moments, and in the unutterable solitude of His communion with God—His existence had been one stainless beam of purity, one full, overflowing effusion of love; “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” His words proclaim Him to be in His own eyes; and do they not also bind the Father to the same estimate, for they are spoken in such circumstances, as to commit the Judge of all: nay, had not the Judge of all already spoken once and again, in the same strain, “Thou art My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”? Here then, brethren, is a fixed point, on which, amidst the failure and wreck of all earthly perfection, and our felt need of a true and spotless righteousness, we may plant our foot and find it resting on the rock of ages. For Jesus finished this great work in doing and in dying, not for Himself, but for us miserable sinners! He did not stoop from heaven to earth, and run this

race amidst agony and blood that he might eclipse all other competitors, and leave a solitary monument, lofty, but fruitless, in our still darkened sky, too high for us to reach, provoking despair, rather than the sense of enrichment and redemption. His righteousness is for our faith to appropriate, and for our destitution to call our own. Its perfection is thus of the most practical character. It is the perfection of the price that pays our ransom. It is the perfection of the sword that cuts our chains. It is the perfection of the compass that saves the ship, and but for which all its priceless treasures would be forfeited. Let us then render to the finished work of Christ this practical homage of our confidence. Let us begin where Christ Himself has ended, not by adding to His work, or weaving into it threads of our own devising, but by clothing ourselves with it, as our only shelter, and saying with a clearness and emphasis that repeats His own, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded!"

§ 2. But *secondly*, our Lord evidently regards His work as finished, *with feelings of thankfulness*. Not for the perfection of His work alone but for the completion of it, does He so rejoice in this closing hour. We thus see with what strain and sense of burden and conflict, the Lord had struggled through to that haven which was now full in view. It was this joy set before Him that made the prospect of His cross and bitter passion endurable. "Now come I to Thee!" A few short hours, and the cup should be drunk, the bloody baptism for ever exhausted, and His soul at rest in the bosom of the Father! Can we doubt that Christ, even in heaven, recalls all the

labour of the way, and especially the labour of those last steps, in which the darkness was to gather to its blackest gloom, and in which, if His soul could have fainted, it would have slept in silence? And if Christ must still remember that awful shadow now that it has for ever given place to the light of God's countenance—that wormwood and gall, now that He has drunk so long of the river of God's pleasures, what must His sense of loneliness, of sadness, of heaviness and grief have been, as the sorrows of death began to compass Him about, and as the load of sin and woe not His own threatened to bring the mighty runner to the ground. In the words of the text we have this struggle reflected, but also the hope and the certainty of approaching deliverance. We see what our redemption has cost Him, but we see it when the warrior is in the arms of victory. Shall we not then sympathise with Christ, in this truly human as well as divine side of this great encounter not with His foes only but with ours? And if there be here something of an unwonted agitation, something of a mysterious rapture, something of a strange thrill of joy, as He catches after the eclipse the first rays of the returning orb that speaks of endless day, shall we not, sinners as we are, enter into this outburst of the sinless One, as in our name, and over our rescue, He raises the glad shout of triumph and of redemption, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do!"

§ 3. *Thirdly*, and lastly, our Lord regards His work as finished, *with feelings of hope*. The past is now assured, and the soul of the Redeemer leaps forth into the future. Who ever stood on such a

pinnacle of achievement ! A great poet of this century has described the emotions of one of the discoverers and conquerors of the New World, as he stood with his companions in arms "silent, upon a peak in Darien," overawed by the vastness of the region that should one day be overrun by armies and swept by fleets. But what better conquests, not of sin and wrath, but of love and grace stretched before the Saviour of the world ! Over the waving fields and forests of history, over better mines than those of gold and silver—over the mighty realms of a ransomed territory—bounded by the vast eternal sea, He stood supreme ! He had but to wave His hand, and His conquering hosts should appear, eager to burst away from their former tyrants, and lay whole nations at His feet. Time was not to antiquate a religion which was the daughter of eternity ; but the mark of His Spirit was to be ever fresh and new upon races and generations that should exalt through long ages His blessed name. Such was the spectacle that met the Saviour's eye, as it took in the whole vista of time, while eternity came in to swell the ever-rising wonder, and to show all that had been won in this glorious victory ! What is all greatness compared with this ? We only rise to true greatness, when we come into sympathy with this all-subduing system, when we take in its proportions and exalt its results ; when fired with its conquests we hand it outward to wider regions, and onward to other ages, and move with the mighty host of agents and influences that carry it into the vast eternity, which can alone be its home and dwelling-place ! Let us thus take up the work of Jesus and pursue it to the end. Then it shall be at once the ground of

our confidence and the lesson of our imitation, giving unity to our aims and strength to our resolutions. It shall bring pardon for our failures and acceptance even for our successes. The end of one enterprise shall be the beginning of another. Age shall not bring exhaustion, nor death despondency. And when we finish our work, though (alas!) we cannot finish it as Jesus did, we shall, through His grace, feel, that we are only commencing it in a higher strain, and are rising from a world where we have glorified God so little, to another where we shall glorify and enjoy Him for ever.

This subject teaches us, among other lessons, the sad and mournful mistake and error of those who live for a different end from that of Christ and His Church. It is impossible to acquit them, without condemning Christ and His people. Either you do not think of glorifying God at all, or you propose to do so in a different way from Christ. If you do not believe at all in God, methinks in the face of Christ's glorious devotion, your life must look poor and mean even to yourself. If you profess to believe in God, but in a different way, can you think that you are so likely to be in the right? Have you done and suffered so much for God, and have you had the same seal of marvellous success in recovering men to His knowledge and love? It is a serious responsibility to go up to a judgment seat, where Christ expected to sit, with your plan and your life dead against Him, and against even His claims to pronounce upon you. Is it a likely thing that He who has been so wonderfully in the right should be here mistaken, and would His return to judge the world, and you as a part of it, be more startling, than the

change which has come over even the world towards Him, since He was despised and rejected of men? Perhaps you even call yourself a Christian, but with no desire to be saved by, or to resemble Christ. Then you are self-condemned, for you will not glorify God as your Master has taught you. You will call Him Lord, but do none of the things which He has commanded! O for repentance here, and the faith which will bring a brighter, happier future! It should be with tears and groans over a wasted life, that a new and blessed one is chosen, with Christ for its centre; and Christ will in this turning round—this conversion—see the only joyful feature which your life has yet displayed, and as He rejoiced over His own perfect life when it was ended, so will He rejoice, with something of a kindred joy, over yours, when as a true and blessed life—in union with Him—it is only beginning!—*Amen.*

XIV

OPINIONS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

“Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?”—MATTHEW xvi. 13

IT is always a matter of interest to know what men think of such a character or person as Jesus Christ. Hence our Lord is represented as twice asking this. Once He asks it, as in Matthew xxii. 41, in the temple, when He says to the Pharisees, “What think ye of Christ?” There, He speaks more of the character, *the* Christ or Messiah. Not so much, What do you think *me* to be? as, What do you think any Messiah, your own included, to be? Is He to be a Son of David, and how can He be so, since David calls Him Lord? Here, in this text before us, our Lord again raises the question, and this time, He propounds it to His disciples. Nor does He ask so much about the Messiah in general, or what kind of a Messiah men expected, as rather, of what men thought about Himself, and how far their ideas of Him went. This was interesting to our Lord, for the sake of the men about whom He asked, and still more that He might lead the disciples, amidst the variety and confusion that prevailed, to a satisfactory and saving answer for themselves. Hence, as He

had withdrawn to this northern solitude, for quiet and separate discourse with His disciples, this conversation near Cæsarea Philippi, ending with the confession of Peter, will be ever memorable. So we, I think, in an age like this, when there is a great variety and confusion of opinion regarding our Lord Jesus Christ, may withdraw from the world to talk it over, in order to establish our faith in Him—the true and eternal faith of the Church—as the Christ, the Son of the living God. We have not much to do now, in asking what kind of a character any Messiah is to be. That only respects the Jews, and our discussion with them, as nobody else expects one. But we have much to do in asking what kind of an actual person men think Jesus of Nazareth to have been; for there still come answers that are interesting and important, whether they be true or not, and by these our own faith, by the grace of God, may be helped or strengthened, as that of the apostles was in the case before us.

It is indeed a wonderful thing, that the Jesus of Christian history is still so much talked about and discussed. Why have men not ceased to speak of Him altogether? Why are they not agreed in some conclusion or other? It was not so wonderful, that men in Judæa should be debating and differing about Him after only two or three years, and when they were seeing Him every day. But that men should be still differing and contending about Him after nineteen centuries, and now that He has Himself long disappeared from the field, this may well make those who are not Christians pause, for it shows that there is about Jesus a mystery, a depth, a singularity,

which agrees better with the Christian view than that of the world.

But without further delay, let us proceed to consider some of the present-day opinions about Jesus Christ which fall short of the truth, although, like those reported by the disciples, they may contain some portion of it. I shall not mention any present-day opinions about Christ, that are in the main unfavourable. The disciples did not mention any to Jesus, though they knew that they existed. So we may leave in the darkness any opinions of Jesus that do not admit Him to be a good man and an honest teacher. This length the world has now come. Let us begin even a point higher.

I. Take, *first*, the opinion of those, *who*, in our day, *consider Jesus to have been the best of men that ever lived, but do not consider Him to have been perfectly sinless*. It would be easy to quote the opinions of writers, living, or recently deceased, who hold something like this ; or who think it possible to build up a new society called by the name of Jesus on this foundation. They hope thus to satisfy what is now so generally admitted, the high and wonderful place of Jesus in the history of the world, and yet keep clear of miracles, for they see that if Jesus was perfectly good and holy, then a miracle must be allowed. Now can this opinion about Jesus, that He was so eminently good, but not perfectly sinless, be entertained ? I shall mention three objections to it that seem fatal. The *first* and most serious is, *that it is contrary to the Saviour's own claims*. We must take the claims of Jesus from the narratives ; for if these are not to be trusted, we need not argue further. Now, we find that Jesus always claimed to be sinless. He

sets Himself up as a model, "Learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart." He places Himself on one side as the physician, while others are the sick. He is the Son of Man who has come to seek and to save the lost. He forgives the sins of others, but never confesses any of His own. He claims at last to judge the world, and to say to men, "Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity." Thus it is in the first three gospels, and then in the fourth the language is, if possible, more express, "The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always the things that please Him." "Which of you convinceth me of sin." "I have glorified Thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Much more could be quoted to the same effect ; and now the question is, if Christ could have been conscious of sin, and yet have concealed it, or if he could have been a sinner, and not have been conscious of it? Those who profess to think so highly of Christ are not consistent with themselves. They destroy Christ's eminence, which they wish to uphold ; for is a good man eminently good, is he good at all, who makes such claims as Christ did, and seems to go through the world, so like an exception to the universal corruption, who does not see, or who will not, beyond all mistake, acknowledge the common inheritance? I will, therefore, believe Christ more than these eulogists, and take Him at His own higher measure rather than theirs. But, *secondly*, the *objection to Christ's sinlessness is founded on a prejudice*. That prejudice is, that to be without sin, is a miracle, and that a miracle cannot happen. But can it be said that a miracle of this kind *ought* not to happen? Do we not admit, that we all *ought* to be free from some particular sin, as that of the drunkard, or the

liar, or the thief? Is he not bound to be free, each from that sin? And does his obligation stop there? Is he not bound to be free from a great deal more? And where is it to stop? Suppose that drunkard, liar, thief, became as holy as the apostle Paul, would he not be bound to go on unto perfection? And suppose that all men became as holy as the apostle, would they not be still bound to follow after and reach all holiness, or fail of their duty? But would not this be a thing that never happened. Therefore the thing that never happens should happen. It is our fault and our sin that it does not; and can this be objected to Jesus, that in Him that happens which ought to happen in us all? Is there any sacredness in sin as a law of nature, that it should be respected as a fixed and benevolent arrangement of divine wisdom? Do the wisdom and the goodness of God not lie in breaking this miserable reign first in Jesus, and then through Him in us, and is not this the gladdest tidings, to be received by philosophy itself, as by the human heart, not with incredulity, but with eager welcome? So the best and wisest of men have felt; and it is rather to be regarded as a dark superstition that because evil has long and widely—but for Jesus—universally, reigned, it is therefore to be canonised as necessary and eternal.

The *third* and last objection, which I take to this opinion about Christ is, that *it deprives Him of all place in connection with salvation*. This does not need to be argued before a Christian audience. One who is himself a sinner cannot bring salvation to others. And in fact, those who exalt Christ so much as a good but not a perfect man, cannot bring Him into any necessary place for us with God at all. He

is not even a messenger of God to us. His words, as they cannot believe in any revelation, have not for us any divine authority. We should need another revelation to tell which of His actions is for us an example and which not. He is the greatest ; and yet He is not so much to us as Moses to the Jews, and Mahomet to the Turks, for He has written in God's name no statute, and set up no world-wide institution ; and thus His religion coming down to such a level is become human. It has fallen from such a height that it is broken in pieces.

II. There is a *second* opinion in our day about Jesus, which goes farther, but yet does not go far enough : for it regards Him, *as a perfect man, but not the God-man*. There are those who get over all the difficulties about miracles, and about a sinless humanity ; and yet they cannot say with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now this opinion, which makes Jesus as high, humanly speaking as He can be, which can go so far even as to lift Him to the level of angels or above them, while it denies Him to be truly God as well as man, may have for some certain attractions, but it is burdened by far greater and insuperable difficulties. Only two of these I shall mention. *First*, the view of Christ which grants Him to be perfect man, but denies Him to be God, *is opposed to the clear testimonies of Scripture*. This evidence is more extensive than can be stated, for it is found not only in many texts, but is taken for granted in far more. I shall ask you to look chiefly at one or two of our Lord's own utterances, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." How could this be, if there were not as deep a mystery in the Son as in the Father? So in the

passage whence the text is taken, only His Father could reveal Him to Peter ; and Jesus elsewhere declares that only He Himself knows the Father well enough to reveal Him. So in John He says, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." He connects His working with that of the Father, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work ;" and His coming and self-manifestation with that of the Father, "If a man love Me he will keep My words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." So His great prayer, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." So He claims to be still in heaven, "The Son of Man who is in heaven," and yet as about to remain on earth, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world." The Apocalypse is full of this strain, "I am Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty." So the apostles and first Christians teach, "The Word was God . . . The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "He was in the form of God . . . but took upon Him the form of a servant." "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." So the Old Testament is applied, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands." "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." The *second* argument against those who, while granting our Lord's humanity to be perfect, deny His divinity, is *found in the ever-recurring refusal of the Christian Church to rest in such a view.* It is a proof that the evidence against any view is strong, when the Christian Church, tested from age to

age, rejects it. Now the view, that brings Christ down from the rank of God, has been thus over and over again rejected. The most celebrated of these conflicts was, about three centuries after Christ, when the gospel was gaining its last triumph over the persecutions of the pagan Roman empire. The error arose in connection with Arius in Alexandria, that Christ, however exalted, was not truly divine. Many followed him, chiefly in the subtle and speculative regions of the East. The creed, called Nicene, was set up against this error, but it was widely and long resisted. Successive emperors, now professing Christianity, did all they could, by force and intrigue, to support it, while the great champion of the truth, Athanasius, was seven times banished. He and others defended Christianity by exactly the same arguments and interpretations as are still employed. The battle lasted the best part of a century. The Arians were willing to grant to Christ the highest titles short of true divinity. But here the conscience of the Church held out; and after the fullest hearing, and even unfair advantages, this error was put away by the greatest theologians, the most influential preachers, and the most earnest believers. Similar to this was the trial in England nearly two centuries ago, after the great persecutions under the Stuarts, when some high names in the Church of England, and some also among the Dissenters, revived the same views. Every argument was employed, every difficulty restated; but the same replies were made, and it was asked, Why does the Scripture so appear to converge to this centre, if it be an error? Can there be two divinities, a great and a small? And would it be right to worship, to pray, or to baptize in connection with

one who was not truly God? Once again, in the beginning of this century, in our own country and in America, this question has come up, but this time, not with any higher or Arian views, connected with Christ, but only what are called Unitarian; and the issue has been the same; for the vast body of Christian congregations has held fast the view of Christ's Deity, the tens being on one side and the thousands on the other. It is not indeed a question to be decided merely by numbers. But when we see the issue in successive ages of light and inquiry decided in the same way, it is a confirmation of the testimony of Scripture; and those may well consider whether they are doing Christ sufficient homage, who refuse, in the face of the great body of the Christian Church, to add to the highest name of man, the mighty honours of the true Son of God!

III. The *third* opinion, regarding Christ, and the last that I shall here notice, that goes far, but not far enough, is that which grants Him *to be a divine Saviour, but not a Saviour by atoning sacrifice*. There has come to be in our day a certain tendency to lay stress on the work of Christ in saving men, more upon other sides, than upon the side of bearing the penalty of their sins and thus satisfying for them the justice of God. Emphasis falls upon Christ's example, or upon a new life which He begins in them by His Holy Spirit; while the doctrine of atonement, if not in the old sense discredited, and put away, is so lost in the general idea of self-denial and self-sacrifice, that it is hard to be recognised. Now we fully grant the splendour and beauty of Christ's example, and the necessity and preciousness, beyond all price, of the working of His Spirit. But we need to hold up also,

in its Scripture prominence, the necessity and value of Christ's atoning sufferings and death, as our satisfaction and our ransom. We have in Christ's own teaching, all the points of this great doctrine. You have, *first*, a doctrine of penalty following sin. Our Lord when setting forth the love of God in John iii. 16, supposes that men would otherwise "perish." He speaks of unbelief bringing them into "condemnation," "He that believeth not is condemned already;" which surely does not mean that other sin had not before put them under condemnation; and hence His words are explained by the evangelist, in the last verse of the same chapter, "The wrath of God *abideth* on him." Men are thus, according to Christ, in their sins before they are guilty of unbelief, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." *Secondly*, this doctrine is taught by what Christ says of His own substitution. "I lay down My life for the sheep"; "My body is given for you" (Luke xxii. 19). "My blood is shed for many" (Mark xiv. 24). "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." *Thirdly*, this doctrine follows from our Lord connecting His death with the forgiveness of sins, "This is My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This connects the remission of sins *directly* with His death. It is not a remote consequence but an immediate, as when Paul says, "We are justified by His blood." "We are saved from wrath through Him." *Fourthly* and lastly, the fact that Christ connects His death with a covenant, and with a new covenant, brings it in His own teaching into line with the Old Testament sacrifices. Thus He says in Matthew (xxvi. 28),

"This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins;" and in Mark xiv. 24, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many;" (Luke xxii. 20), "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, even that which is poured out for you." Christ thus Himself suggests the parallel between His covenant death, and that of the sacrifices under the Old Testament, where, as is more fully explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the victims (so-called) really deserved the name, dying as the substitutes of those who confessed their sins over them, according to the principle, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Here then we find in Christ's own teaching as to His death, the fulfilment of the Old Testament and the starting-point of the New. We find the explanation of the sadness of Christ's life as the man of sorrows, and its joyful power to take away the sting of death, which is sin, and to break the strength of sin, which is the law. We find in His cross rightly contemplated the centre of His redemption, as deliverance alike from the guilt and power of evil, and we find the song of the Church on earth taken up and repeated in heaven, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood."

Are we then, my hearers, prepared, amidst the conflicts and tumults of our times, thus to give the true, the ancient, the eternal answer, to the question of Jesus, "Whom say ye that I am?" We cannot escape it; for it follows us everywhere; and we go up at last to the bar of judgment to give

in our answer to Him, who has come down from heaven to earth, and poured out His blood for us, that our answer might be of the right and saving kind. Let none of us say that this is a small matter, only what we believe about one of the many persons that have moved across the scene of time, and left their names in history. It cannot be so, if Christ is God, if He is the world's only Saviour, and if our salvation depends on knowing and believing the truth concerning Him. It just comes back to this ; are we fit to live anywhere in God's world, if we are sinners and rebels against Him ; if we will not take God's remedy for our sin and condemnation ; if we make light of His great salvation, and will not have Christ to reign over us ? Every audience is divided by this line into the obedient and disobedient, into the saved and the lost, into the friends of Christ and His enemies, according to His own word, " He that is not with Me is against Me : he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." Soon the decision will be unalterable—the loss irrecoverable. But it is still the accepted time and the day of salvation ; and O that there may be those here, with whom error shall be changed into truth, rejection into faith, and ruin into safety, so as to call forth that benediction of Christ, which can only come once in a lifetime—once in all eternity : " Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven !"—*Amen.*

XV

THE PENITENT MALEFACTOR

LUKE xxiii. 39-43

IN these verses we have an example of the interesting way in which the evangelists, without contradicting, supplement each other. In the fourth gospel, in a manner not like its usual style where it touches on points already reported, we find, instead of any addition, the briefest statement of the fact anywhere given ; for it simply tells us, that our Lord had two other crucified with Him : " On either side one and Jesus in the midst," without saying a word as to their character. The first and second evangelists add to our knowledge, for they state that these persons were malefactors (thieves or robbers), and that they took part with the multitude in reviling the Saviour. This might have been all that we ever learned : and in that case the information, though scanty, would have been far from uninformative. It would have confirmed by another feature the accuracy of the crucifixion narrative, as we know from other sources, that crucifixion was a punishment to which numbers were condemned together. It would have fulfilled a part of the most remarkable of all Old

Testament prophecies respecting the Messiah : " And He was numbered with the transgressors." It would have illustrated the malignity of our Lord's enemies in appointing Him such persons as His companions in dying, and in placing Him between them as the worst criminal of the three. Nor would it have failed to bring out the depravity of the race for which the Saviour died, as capable of insulting even an innocent fellow-sufferer in death, whether in wantonness or in the hope of aggravating personal agony.

All these lessons would have remained, had the Gospel of Luke never been written at all. There is nothing discordant : but how new is the impression which these few touches give ! What in the other gospels is like a beacon set up to warn is converted into a trophy of redeeming grace, and a beam of light so sweet and cheering, as to have come only direct from heaven, is let in upon the mortal darkness of the crucifixion. It will reward us to study this incident of saving experience in the chief lights in which it is here presented ; and may He whose hour of deepest sorrow was soothed by it when it occurred assist our humble effort to set it forth, and make it, as He alone can, yield something to His glory, now that He has long come into His kingdom !

I. We have to consider the experience of the malefactor before us, *first*, as that of a *convert*. Luke has recorded many conversions. He is the historian of conversions, first in this gospel, and then in the Acts of the Apostles, as witness the case of Levi, of Zaccheus, of the woman that was a sinner, of the Ethiopian treasurer, of the Philippian jailor, of Saul of Tarsus, and many others. But Luke has

not anywhere, I think, recorded a conversion so wonderful as this. It is like a star that shines apart. It could only occur once in the history of the world, and "none but itself can be its parallel." To estimate aright the magnitude of this conversion, we would require to bear in mind some such considerations as those which I now enumerate. Some have endeavoured to under-estimate the singularity of this conversion from a prejudice against all conversions, and others because they thought it was a bad example to hold out the possibility of a great change in the last extremity. But rising above these influences and looking at the facts as they stand, we must do justice to these remarkable circumstances in this conversion.

§ 1. We must note, *first*, as enhancing the greatness of this conversion, *the previous character of the convert*. Of his earlier history we have indeed no detailed account: but we have enough to show that he belonged to the criminal class, who neither feared God nor regarded man. It was only the worst criminals who were doomed to the cross: and by his own confession, he was not doomed to it unjustly. He may have had—as many a criminal has had—his moments of relenting and his resolutions of repentance. But these had not arrested his sinful career: and now that sin—all but finished—is bringing forth death. Think also what is involved in his reviling the Saviour! Some have supposed that this was the act only of his impenitent associate, and that as Luke does not charge him with this, the other evangelists are to be understood as ascribing generally to two what only held good of one. But though this mode of speech is doubtless to be found

in the Bible, as in all other books, I do not think that there is any reason, especially as Matthew and Mark speak so distinctly of both malefactors reviling Christ, for limiting this to one; and hence it seems more likely that what Luke records is a change in the one rather than a difference from the beginning. If this be so, then how hard the heart, which could permit one dying man—and one who was dying for his crimes—to revile another, who had done him no wrong. If this was wicked in the multitude, how much more in one, whose own sin was finding him out. Here is inhumanity—here is defiance of God's righteous judgment: here is a character apparently prepared for the awful darkness into the midst of which it seemed about to pass and be lost to hope.

§ 2. A *second* circumstance, which enhances the wonderful nature of this conversion is, *its unlikelihood in the special circumstances of the case*. There are those who place confidence in the scenes of a death-bed, as a likely means of inducing reflection and inspiring repentance. It is a miserable superstition to trust in this, against which the ministers of God have constantly to warn men. How much more where the deathbed was the cross, fevering the brain, parching the tongue, and ere long wearing out the whole system with slow exhaustion. Even had reflection been otherwise possible, the wild shouts beneath the cross would have disturbed it; and thus everything was adverse. Or if we grant one thing favourable in the mysterious Providence, which gave this man the Saviour of the world for his companion in death, and made him the spectator of that Saviour's dying virtues, even this advantage seemed to be

thrown away on his hardened nature, and likely through his unbelief to prove a stumbling-block over which he would fall into a worse perdition. There were worse men, I doubt not, around the Saviour's cross than he, and men who had sinned against greater light. There was one, at least, as hardened on the other side. But of all the unconverted sinners then alive upon the earth, I do not think there was one humanly speaking less likely to be brought to repentance, not one humanly speaking more likely to die as he had lived, and to hold right on in the downward path he had so long pursued till his steps took hold upon perdition. The idea of conversion in such a case, had it suggested itself to any one in that crowd, would have been instantly repelled, with something like the despairing exclamation, "Wilt Thou show Thy wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" The greater reason then surely to admire that sovereign grace, which was already preparing to convert this vessel of wrath fitted by his own sin for destruction, into a vessel of mercy meet for the Master's use; the greater reason for the adoring exclamation, when the work was done, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?"

§ 3. A *third* circumstance, which exalts the wonder of this conversion is, *the suddenness with which it was produced*. The crucifixion began, as Mark tells us (xv. 33), at "the third hour." At "the sixth hour," or noon, the darkness fell. The conversion did not take place for some time after the crucifixion began; and it must have been accomplished ere the darkness covered all, since Jesus did not afterwards converse with men. Some portion of three hours therefore shuts in this great miracle. There may have been

conversions, by the clock, more sudden than this. But does it not enhance the glory of the change, that it came so quickly—the work of Him who “in a moment suddenly,” can make old things pass away and all things become new, lighting up the moral darkness by a transition as marvellous as that of nature in its first birth? There should be no prejudice against sudden conversions. The Bible is full of them. However gradual in its steps, the last act must be decisive. It is in harmony with philosophy itself, that between the kingdoms of death and life there should be a sharp boundary—not a vague and indeterminate frontier.

§ 4. A *fourth* feature to be noticed in this conversion is, *the completeness and maturity by which it was marked*. There is here every element of regenerate character. The Spirit of Christ according to His promise is sent to convince the world of “sin.” This is the foundation of all saving change: and it is here laid. How hard is it to convince any criminal of his trespass, and to bring him to confession! Here the work is done. “We suffer justly”; “we receive the due reward of our deeds.” But there is more than homage to violated human law. There is evident repentance towards God. The Spirit also convinces of “righteousness,” that is, as I understand John xvi. 10, “Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see Me no more;” that there is a righteousness not his own which the sinner needs, and which he sees to be provided for him, because the Righteous One has been accepted and taken home to the Father. Now, who can doubt that the penitent malefactor believed of Jesus that He was entirely righteous, and that thus He was

going home to His kingdom, so that his own unrighteousness might thus be met and cancelled? The Spirit, once more, convinces of "judgment": and that "because the Prince of this world is judged." Was it not evident that this captive, long under the Prince of this world, had come to believe in a Higher King, and was already in spirit asking deliverance? Thus every element of regeneration, every fruit of the Spirit's work, is present. But look also at the strength and maturity of these principles! Mark how he seeks to bring his companion in sin to the same humble acknowledgment and retractation of error, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Mark the working of faith, which leads him, great as he felt his sins to be, still to cleave to the only Saviour, and yet the fine blending of humility, which allows him to ask nothing but remembrance! Mark the breathing of love, low but deep, as it pleads for this, and feels that it does not plead in vain! Have we not here then a soul full-born at once? Has he not passed as by a bound from the pole to the tropic—from that frozen zone where life dies and death lives, to that happier region, where spiritual freshness and beauty proclaim the winter to be as in an instant charmed away? To that Living One, then, whose grace achieved all—to that God over all, blessed for ever, who only doeth wonderful works—to that Quickener of the dead, who calleth for the things that are not, and they come, let us ascribe all the glory!

§ 5. Our survey of this conversion would be quite incomplete, if a *fifth* and last feature were neglected, viz. *the scantiness of the means by which it was effected*. At first sight no means whatever appear.

There are not even signs or expressions of power, as when the Saviour spoke to the elements or touched the bodies of men. Doubtless Omnipotence could have made up for means of conversion, especially as it must always come in to make them effectual. But we are taught that conversion is a moral process, a change connected with saving truth ; and when we look more closely, we can discern that this conversion is not an abrupt miracle, but one where means are employed, however extraordinary. Thus the wonder does not lose but gains in interest. We are never to forget that this malefactor was a Jew. Hence there were in him some elements of Jewish training and culture. He knew the law of Moses ; he knew the great national hope of a Messiah. It has often been said that the Jews had wholly ceased to expect any but a temporal Deliverer. But is this so clear, more especially when they still expect one, who, though far from a Saviour such as Christians look for, is more than a mere worldly potentate ? This man, even as a Jew and a depraved one, may have had in his creed, a Messiah, who could do something for the soul. He knew that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, and was undergoing death in support of that claim. He knew that He gave Himself out as King of the Jews. He may have seen the title on the cross, and could not fail to hear it mockingly repeated. He knew also that Jesus claimed to work miracles, for this His enemies conceded, " He saved others ; " nay, was not this his own taunt and that of his companion, " If thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us " ? And the most mysterious thing of all was that this despised and rejected One took a stranger title, " He made Himself the Son of God ; "

for not only did enemies cast this in His teeth, but He had appropriated the name in praying for His murderers, "*Father*, forgive them!" Is it going too far to say then, that in these fragments of truth, thus mutilated, distorted, and caricatured, we have the gospel of salvation, which reached and enlightened this wandering soul? The Spirit of God enabled him to piece these fragments together, and also to read them backwards, so as to convert every denial into an affirmation, and every word of mockery into an attribute of honour. Nor must we forget that the Saviour preached by His life and deportment, and never so much as now. How must the effect of all have been enhanced by His look and manner, so calm, magnanimous, and Godlike! We may suppose the effect of all this, as working with the rising struggle of conscience, and shaking the sinner's unbelief. He passes through a crisis from scorn to misgiving, and from misgiving to serious doubt. He is for a time a *sceptic* in the true sense of the term, actually wavering between doubt and conviction. How many abuse the word, without one struggle or sense of pain! But to him it is an awful uncertainty, full of eternal issues: "Who can tell but that this may after all be the Christ!" At length faith prevails. "Lord, I believe: help mine unbelief." The joyful cry bursts from his deepest heart, "I have found the Messiah"—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Shall we not adore then that sovereign grace, which from materials so scanty educes a result so glorious, which turned the jeers of enemies into hymns and sermons, and even the scoffs of his own lips into the watchwords of faith and hope? Thus can the soul when tossed upon the

“melancholy main” be saved as upon “boards and broken pieces of the ship ;” as if a child should believe in God, not by Nature’s great wonders, the roll of the thunder, or the midnight stars, but from a parent’s oaths and curses revealing somewhere a faith in a power to save or to destroy ; or as if an infidel should become a Christian not by the study of the Bible or kindred arguments, but by reversing and reading backward all that is lowest in our unbelieving literature !

What then is the practical inference to be drawn from so great a stretch of divine forgiveness ? Is it that we should delay our own repentance till the eleventh hour, or even after the eleventh hour has passed away, in the hope that the grace of God may come in and work a like deathbed rescue ? If there be any who are disposed to make such a use of so glorious an incident they must be self-condemned—their own heart must whisper an echo of the Scripture warning, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God !” In vain will you plead the conduct of this malefactor as a plea for refusing Christ, since so far as we know he had never met Him before ; and then this was his only opportunity. But there are lessons, most needful and precious, here taught, both in regard to others and to ourselves. The lesson in regard to others is, never to despair of them, how far beyond hope soever their conversion seems to be. Though they have run to an excess of riot, have broken the law of man as well as God in their high-handed career, have even made themselves the inmates of the convict cell, yet on such the converting grace of God may descend. We are warranted to implore it on their behalf, and on such

sinner of deepest dye God may work His most marvellous work, and set them forth as an example to others who shall hereafter believe. So also the lesson comes in regard to ourselves, if alas! it should still be needed. It matters not how often we may have reviled Christ, or slighted His grace, how far we may have advanced towards the last boundary, if only there be the awakening of any long-buried relenting or regret, if only there be a present willingness to seek the Lord, provided it be with our heart, He will be found of us; man's extremity shall be God's opportunity; and the poor prodigal groping his way homeward, feeble and sore broken, and as amid heavy clouds that precede nightfall, shall be in nowise cast out from his Father's home!

II. Thus far I have considered the experience here recorded as that of a *convert*. But another stage is reached; and we have *secondly* to consider this malefactor as a *witness*. If the convert does not always become the witness, the conversion is only apparent: for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Specially this unexpected witness to Christ was prepared, when all other testimony seemed fading into darkness. One of our Lord's apostles had betrayed Him; another had denied Him; and all for a season had forsaken Him and fled. The Jewish multitude had recalled their hosannahs, and joined openly or tacitly in the protestation, "We have no king but Cæsar." There were in that vast crowd, hearts that clung to Jesus with a love stronger than death, and that would hardly have time to give up faith, though they seemed almost to treat it as dead, "We trusted that it had

been He who should have redeemed Israel." But they were not in circumstances to bear witness to the Messiahship or Deity of Jesus. The beloved disciple was there, and the Virgin Mother of our Lord ; but never had the one found love such an inlet of sorrow ; and as for the other, it was the hour when the sword pierced her heart. Meanwhile the loudest denials of the Saviour's claims were everywhere made ; not in words only, but in the title of the cross, and in the very wreath of thorns. Pilate and Herod, the chief priests and Roman soldiers, were here at one. The human dread that had paid homage to Jesus now revenged itself for its own fears ; and the powers of darkness awaking from their alarms insulted the Mighty Antagonist, as one whose strength would soon be in the grave. It was in this awful solitude, when Christ was bearing no longer witness to Himself, and when Heaven above seemed to be involving all its past testimonies in mysterious perplexity and contradiction, by sending Him no help in His hour of utmost need, that this voice was lifted up—the first of a long and glorious series of witnesses, never again to be interrupted or suspended ! The penitent who believes with the heart now makes confession with the mouth. For him the "offence of the cross" exists no more. The pierced hands grasp a sceptre. Other crowns encircle that of thorns. The countenance so marred is fairer than the children of men. The Crucified is the Enthroned—the Lord of angels, the Judge of men. The vision shuts out other sights and other sounds. It is the victorious struggle of salvation, but also the supreme cry of confession, "Lord, remember me !" O the might that slumbered, but did not sleep in the

expiring Saviour's breast—that drew to itself from the opposite extremity of being this poor castaway and attached him with a death grasp when friends fell off, and disciples forsook their plighted vows—that inspired him with a faith, a zeal, a courage that put apostles to shame—that led him, first of mankind, into the connection between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow—that opposed him as a moral barrier to the tide of ridicule and blasphemy streaming against the cross, and turned it back on those who urged it ; and that by a moral miracle like this, mightier far than the rending of the rocks or the opening of the graves, proved that He who wrought it was indeed “Christ a King,” the “Ruler of the Spirits of men—the Son of the Blessed !”

And, now, mark how this offer of homage as to a king, was most royally accepted and responded to. The denials of the multitude our Lord had heard with magnanimous silence. These could no more affect the truth than the clouds that gather around the sun can hinder his rising on the morrow. But as that sun, restored to the sky, meets with benignant eye every flower that turns to his beams, so did the Saviour of the world now look down on this humble worshipper of His majesty. He speaks from the cross as from a throne. He who on earth had not where to lay His head disposes of seats in paradise. Rejected in the world of the visible, He extends an empire into the world of the invisible, which proves that the visible too is still His kingdom. There is in His answer celestial grace ; but say, too, if there is not more, celestial dignity. The mock title and the crown of thorns cannot disguise Him ;

and He has only to speak with His own voice to make men and angels and the spirits of darkness own their Lord. Ye blind worshippers of other gods, look here and behold your anointed king! If this be not God incarnate, what would be His style and bearing? He is here not in unconscious weakness, as when adored in the manger by the wise men, the star above that cradle the only voucher of His God-like birth. He is here in visible divine greatness, the greatness of one who can endure the cross, despising the shame, and look down on the crowns and thrones of paradise as beneath His feet. Here is the foretoken of a day so awful that we all shall feel it, "Behold He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him, they also that pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him!" O my soul, art thou not warned by the gleam that the Judge is at the door? Shall not thy stubborn heart at length own this Mighty One that bleeds for thee? Shall it not break with the cry of godly fear, of bursting joy—"My Lord and my God!"

III. This leads us to the last experience, that of the penitent and witness as a *suppliant*. "Behold he prayeth." Never in the history of supplication did a more wonderful prayer force its way. "Shall I pray? I who never have prayed before. I who have been so great and hardened a transgressor, who have sinned against heaven, and even now blasphemed this heavenly King! Would that I had known sooner: then had I never opened my lips against Him, then had I spoken sooner in His vindication! I have spoken *for* Him: but dare I speak *to* Him? Dare I bring my guilt into contact with His purity, my worthlessness into the full view of

His majesty? Dare I break in upon His divine sacredness, stepping as He is to a throne? Yes, I must and will speak. He is a King, but He is a Saviour too. He who has saved others can save me. He who has prayed for others, because they did it ignorantly, will not refuse me, who in ignorance have reviled and blasphemed Him! O for one kindly thought, one pitying remembrance, one glimpse of His mercy backward on me from His high estate! Surely the cross has not thus brought us together to be for ever parted, for that to me were worse than death! My declining sun is all but set, and where, O where shall I find another light of hope? Yes, He will own me; He will answer me; there is room in a heart so large and loving even for me!" Through some such strife of conflicting emotions must this prayer have struggled forth, a prayer in which humility contends with faith for the mastery, and in which the sorrows of a broken heart mingle their deep and plaintive undertones with the importunities of desire and the aspirations of hope.

And now mark the answer which comes, swift and gracious, even while the penitent yet spake. Truly, if the prayer was wonderful, more wonderful was the reply, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer." Every word is emphatic. Here is divine condescension, stooping to the labouring faith, that needed some special help, as with the words of an oath, that it might have strong consolation, having fled to such a refuge, "Verily I say unto thee." However lingering and long-delayed thy prayer, thy prayer is heard! My blood speaks for thee! My heart speaks to thee,

“Verily I say unto thee!” Here is divine love meeting the new-born love of the soul that refused to let the Christ go, and asked, were it for nothing more, only for remembrance. “Thou shalt be remembered, more than remembered, thou shalt be with Me!” And here is the fulness of divine power, annihilating all distance, levelling all distinctions, and bringing the extremes of time and space and universal being together, that prayer might be answered, exceeding abundantly above all that was asked or thought, “To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise!” Who can tell what the penitent expected? Was it that Christ should set up a glorious earthly kingdom? Or that Himself rising to a higher, He should leave His follower to a temporary separation? The struggle of prayer anyhow brought repose. But now how far is everything transcended. Not to an earthly kingdom is he reserved, but to a heavenly paradise. Nor to a paradise wanting in any way its best attraction, but lighted up with Jesus as its central glory. Nor to a paradise that should be his after a protracted agony on the cross or some other sojourn below—but to-day while it was called to-day, ere the sun had struggled through its long eclipse to its setting, or the Spirit of his Lord going before, had almost had time to prepare for his quick succeeding flight! O memorable answer! O eventful day! At morning-tide out of Christ, with noon-tide in Christ, ere even-tide with Christ! The extremes of ruin and of redemption here fall together, and the work of grace is completed almost ere it is begun! Christ contracts the distance between life and death to a single step; and with an arm of love that stretches over the whole tremendous interval, raises,

while it fits, those who else had dwelt in darkness, to be companions of Himself, and of the holy angels !

Who among you shall now say that amazing as this marvel of grace is, it must still fall short of the more dread exigencies of your own case ? Your own sin, you sorrowfully urge, is greater, your heart harder, than his can have been. Thus does each awakened sinner place himself on the very limit of despair. But No. The wall of paradise cannot seem to you more great and high than at one point it did to him, its glory cannot be fenced round with more adamantine bulwarks, its light more awfully remote and inaccessible. And yet to him Christ became the way that brought all near. Christ became the door that set all open ; and for you this monument of mercy rises by the side of the Saviour's cross, on the verge of doom and almost within the flood-mark of despair, to testify to you and to all generations, that the prayer of penitence is never unheard, and that whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved ! O the might of prayer, were it but the first prayer offered in weakness and fear and much trembling ! That prayer is mighty as the cross of Christ, for it is clothed with all its might. That prayer abolishes guilt ; it annihilates depravity ; it shakes off the pains of hell and lays hold on immortality. Let it be yours and mine ; and then shall it carry all these blessings in its train ! Yea, it shall enclose a miraculous draught of blessings, which time shall not count nor eternity exhaust ! Henceforth all shall be ours ; life shall be ours ; death shall be ours ; Christ and all His benefits shall be ours ; and whether to-day or to-morrow, or when-

soever our brief earthly stay shall reach its even-tide, that voice which fell on the ear of the dying malefactor, shall fall on our dying ear too, sweeter than all Heaven's music besides, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise!"

In the solemn scene thus grouped together on Calvary, we have all the three possible forms of death. We have the death of the Sinless; we have the death of the sinner who repents; and we have the death of the sinner who puts away repentance. Which of the three shall yours be? It cannot be the death of the Sinless. That belongs to Jesus alone — you cannot claim it without self-condemnation, without destroying your very claim itself. Therefore your death, as that of a sinner, is limited to two possibilities: that of the penitent, and that of the impenitent. How awful is that of the latter, close beside the former, and Christ as near to the one as to the other, only to be put wilfully and, as far as we see, hopelessly away! On that other criminal, as near the opened fountain, as welcome, had he asked it, to the living water, no conversion is seen; in his last end, there is no testimony and no prayer; and if he believed not that Christ was He, must he not have died in his sins? If we will not have the death of the penitent, we must have this. It is as fixed as destiny; but it is fixed by choice.

Let us look again (and O that it were at last with softened heart and brightening eye!) on that central cross which is the hope of the world. The saint needs it exactly as the sinner. There is not a first gospel for the sinner, and a second gospel for the saint, but the same for both. The holiest saint, so far as a title to heaven goes, is the same lost

sinner as at first, an odious criminal on whom the eye of Omniscient purity cannot look. Were it not for the equal promise, revived by the record of all the great sinners, whom the cross has saved, we should all despair ; but as it is, we all may, and if we believe it, must hope. He that remembered that penitent in His own hour of mortal sorrow, will not forget us, now that He has entered into His kingdom ! His kingdom is in the midst of us, yea, I trust is within us ; and in our faith, weak as it often is, and in our hope, faint as it often is, we have some foretaste of the joys of paradise. But not in these, but in Christ Himself, is our salvation founded, and our warrant to take up this imperishable strain, and every other of Christian confidence—

“ There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins ;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

“ The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day ;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.

“ Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved, to sin no more !”

Amen.

XVI

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

“ But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”—ROMANS iv. 5.

IN the arrangement of this great epistle, this chapter comes in to complete the discussion on Justification. It is not absolutely needed for the argument. In the first two chapters and the half of the third, the one topic is the necessity of some scheme of acceptance with God—for the Gentiles, as transgressors of the law of conscience; for the Jews, as violators of their own covenant. In the end of the third chapter this necessity is met by the display of the righteousness of Christ, as the sole but sufficient hope of the world. This *fourth* chapter meets a Jewish difficulty, as it shows that Abraham, the father of the Jews, was really justified in the same way, as the apostle declared they must now be; nay, more, that Abraham was in this the father also of the Gentiles, the great father of all the faithful, who thus came to righteousness, not by works but by faith. Abraham did not work for his favourable standing with God; otherwise he would have made God a debtor. As it was said in the well-known passage of Genesis (xv. 6),

"he believed;" and thus his faith could come in, and he or any other who believed could, on this basis, be justified, even when regarded as ungodly. This is a text, which is evidently designed to assert a principle in its integrity, and therefore I propose at this time, with Divine help, to consider it for a little, both as it stands in the light of Scripture, and of Christian history. My design is not to preach a controversial sermon, but to see how this doctrine really fits in to the context of God's word and of Christian experience.

I. I may begin with a brief explanation of what I understand justification to be. It seems plain that it is not an *inward* change. No doubt an ungodly man may and must be changed inwardly and radically. But Paul has another word for this. His word for this inward change is *Sanctification*; but he distinguishes that before us, as *righteousness* (1 Cor. i. 30). It is the setting of an offender right with the law; and thus is a change not upon *character*, but upon *state*. Thus it is opposed to *condemnation*, "It is God that justifieth: who is He that condemneth?" And hence Christ is said to have been delivered *for our offences*, and raised again for our *justification*, evidently meaning that justification is the clearing from offences; as it is also said, "Blessed are they, whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." This language then, and much besides, quite resists the idea that justification is an inward change. If, then, it be a change of state putting us right with law, how does it come to us? The uniform answer is that it comes to us, as *in* Christ, considered as one with Him, and as accepted for His sake. "There is no condemnation to them

who are *in* Christ Jesus." "*In* Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." But it is more than forgiveness ; for it is said in the verse following the text that God "imputeth righteousness without works ;" and in another passage, there is a righteousness of God "which is upon them that believe ;" so that, taking this in connection with what is also said of Christ's obedience "making many righteous," we cannot but hold, that those who win Christ, and are found in Him, have a righteousness not their own, but His. The last element of this doctrine is that such union to Christ as brings this acceptance is by faith, as it is said, "by whom also we have access by faith into His grace wherein we stand ;" as also in the well-known words "that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." It does not need to be added, that this change from condemnation to acquittal and acceptance is of grace : "It is of faith that it might be by grace."

II. In stating this doctrine in Scripture words, we have so far proved it. But now let us present one or two texts, which from their connection cannot mean anything else than this scheme. Take Gal. iii. 10. The Galatians, as we know, sought to be justified by the law. Paul argues that they must in that case keep the whole law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for the just shall live by faith." Justification was redemption by Christ from the curse of the law ; and thus the prospect that God would justify the nations by faith, a prospect that gave all the nations a part

with Abraham in his own justification by faith was fulfilled. Take, again, 2 Cor. v. 21, "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The balance of this sentence evidently is, that Christ is treated in a way in which he did not deserve to be treated, and that we are treated in a way in which we do not deserve, for His sake. How can this ever mean anything else than justification? And, again, in Rom. v. 8, 9, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." What is urged is the effect of Christ's death to save us from wrath; and the justification we obtain is through His blood. And once more, in the verse after our text, we read of the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth "righteousness without works." How can an inward, a personal righteousness be without works? It must be a blessing from without, a blessing imputed, and not inwardly achieved, that is here meant, and this agrees with the justifying of men, not as now better men, but, regarded in the matter of justification, as "ungodly." Let me only add, as in perfect agreement with this whole teaching of the apostle, that of our Lord, in regard to the publican in Luke xviii. 14, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." This does not mean that the publican was the better man. No doubt he was; but the emphasis is not laid on this, but on his obtaining pardon which the other missed, because he had complied with the terms of gospel justification, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

It may help our understanding of this proof, if I notice some objections to its force. *First*, then, it is said that the apostle *James teaches on this subject a different doctrine from Paul*. This I cannot at all grant; and the longer I consider it, the less do I feel it. Think what a deep doctrine of sin there is in James; think what a strong doctrine of conversion, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide the multitude of sins." Think also how much of what James says is visibly in the line of Paul, exposing a pretended and unreal faith, "Can faith save him? Such a faith as this?" Notice how deeply he conceives faith, as deeper than works, and as needing to be shown by works, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." Whatever is left of difficulty, as where James says that we are justified by works and not by faith only, may either be referred, as many have referred it, to a different justification—before men—or, if it be referred to the same, the apostle may be looked upon, as by a strong expression opposing to a dead faith that is worth nothing, the works that guarantee the living faith, and only in that sense, but not as meritorious, and really equivalent to faith—speaking of them as justifying the soul. What he teaches is really in the end, that we are justified by a working and not by a dead faith; and thus, as has been finely said, even as in the movements of war, those who are opposing different enemies fight with their backs to each other, so the two apostles, though apparently fighting out of line, are after all fighting on the same side.

Secondly, It may be made an objection that this method of pardon and acceptance *has in it something*

unreal and artificial. There is reality, it is said, when you get to an *inward* change. There is no reality in men being pardoned for the sake of another. Now I grant that there would be no reality in men being pardoned for the sake of another, who were wholly and at every point without an inward change. That would be salvation by proxy in a sense held by none; therefore it needs not be assailed and repudiated. What is held is, that men, who as a part of the same salvation, pass through an inward change, and develop it—a change which is in its own place provided for and taken into account,—yet do not from any element of merit or improvement in that change, receive pardon and acceptance at the hands of God, but only do so from regard to the merits of God's Son and their connection with Him. The ultimate reason of their gracious standing with God lies not in themselves, but in Him; and this is not forced, or artificial, or unreal, but a glorious and world-wide truth, which makes up the whole difference between condemnation and justification. If we reject this, we must also reject the whole doctrine of atonement, and everything that is truly said to come to us for Christ's sake. This element has a large place in human society, so that we are endlessly benefited, rescued, in a temporal sense, saved, by the help and intercession of others. Is this, when carried into the higher region of atonement and satisfaction, to be excluded as unreal and factitious? Even the older Unitarians held an efficacy in Christ's work to obtain pardon, beyond its moralising influence: and Dr. Channing in our own day has taught that it has "a special influence in removing punishment."¹ Shall we yield, then, that

¹ *Works*, p. 215.

the ascription of such a virtue to the work of the God-man is a mere fancy, and that a merit in life and death thus created and added to the universe, cannot upon the most solid principles of equity be employed to shield and even to exalt the children of unrighteousness? The *third* and only other objection which I notice is, that after all there is something *hazardous or even dangerous to true inward righteousness in such a scheme of justification*. Our doctrine here, as has often been said, looks very like that of the apostle, because it seems to create the same danger, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" What, if we have also the same guards and checks? How does Paul show in the sixth chapter, that the man freely justified cannot continue in sin? His very justification forbids it. A justified man is one with Christ. Has he been made one with Him to continue in sin? Does he not go through all Christ's experience, dying with Him, and then rising again, so as to leave sin in the grave? It is upon this man solely that the plan of justification takes effect. You need not be afraid that the heavens will fall, if the law of gravitation be upheld; nay, it is the law of gravitation that brings down all the false props of the heavens, and so it is the plan of grace that brings down all other false plans of justification, by man's own wisdom and self-righteousness, that union to Christ may make men Christ-like. If men are one with Christ are they not taught the design of His dying? Are they not believers, who mean what they say, and do they not see that Christ died to make sin hateful, and obedience lovely, and that thus the law comes back not as a taskmaster of the old life, but as a guide and monitor of the new, and that

the love of Christ constrains them to live to Him that died? This, I think, is about the deepest thing in the Epistle to the Romans, and if men can get a better motive power than the sense of obligation to Christ, as the author of forgiveness, and love to Him, it is a region of spiritual dynamics that has been hitherto concealed.

III. We are thus led to consider the tribute to this doctrine in Christian history, which is an ever-accumulating argument in its favour. A glance at the early centuries, at the Reformation, and at the post-Reformation age to our own day will confirm this.

§ 1. We do not find indeed in the second and third centuries the full and ample echo of the doctrine of Paul, which we might have desired. Yet how much, if it were all collected; and especially in one brief anonymous work—the Epistle to Diognetus—which very nearly perished, but survives to tell us, how much may have disappeared, “He gave up His own Son a ransom for us, the holy for the lawless, the innocent for the bad, the righteous for the unjust, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins but His righteousness? In whom could the lawless and ungodly be justified but in God’s only Son? O the sweet exchange! O the unsearchable contrivance! O the unexpected benefits, that the transgression of the many should be covered in the one righteous, and the righteousness of the one justify many transgressors!” Still this doctrine bulks less than in after days. The Church is too much engaged in its great battle with paganism, and then in working out and defending the Trinity, and the Person of Christ—to

make a doctrinal study even of His atonement, and of its application in Justification ; and when in the time of Augustine, three and a half centuries after Paul, the doctrine of grace is fought out, it is in connection with Original Sin and Regeneration, rather than with Pardon. But, after all, the premisses of the one controversy settle the other ; and if man is so fallen and absolutely dependent on regenerating grace as is everywhere by Augustine proclaimed, there could be no room for any such working with God towards his own acceptance as the doctrine of Paul in Justification excludes. Hence this great Church-father, though he may not have seen all the consequences of his own principles, which were afterwards to be drawn out by the Reformers at a later time, was justly claimed by them as on their side, and his theology, with his *Confessions*, casts a bridge that stretched all the way over the Middle Ages, connecting the doctrine of pardon not with merit of any kind, but with grace, and rising up in some of the monuments of that period, as in the “*Dies Irae*,” with a grandeur and tenderness which overawe, while they cheer every devout spirit to this day—

“King of majesty tremendous,
Who dost freely grace extend us,
Fount of Pity, succour send us.”

§ 2. When the Reformation comes, as in the case of Paul and of Augustine, it associates itself with a stupendous personal experience. The Reformation is lived through in the soul of Luther ; and this doctrine is its distinctive and formative principle. There is an inheritance of the past ; and yet a new creation suited to races bursting forth in all the

strength of a new development, but with a religion which they could no longer revere or love. God takes the most fruitful mind and strongest will in all that generation—in many generations,—and by the most terrible discipline bends it lowest, and yet with the deepest trust and joy. This is the centre—the invulnerable centre—not only of Luther's work, but of the whole Reformation, which thus becomes its imperishable monument. The Reformation in its deepest heart is not a literary or political movement, but a religious. It is Christianity returning upon itself, and bringing out of its treasures alike things new and old, but all from the depths of Scripture, darting fresh light and scattering fresh influence. It is also the union of the Spirit with the word—able to make the souls of men new, and to rival the old triumphs of Christianity in zeal, in purity, in courage, in unworldly grandeur, in unfathomable suffering. This doctrine of free justification, embraced by so much of Europe at once, and yielding what the best of Middle Age theology could not inspire, immediate peace and trust, was able to shake the world, and put the name and image of Christ so far again at the head of human society. I speak not of Calvin or Knox, who are in the midst of this enthusiasm, but of a calmer nature, like Hooker, lifted up by this doctrine into the same passion, "Such are we in the sight of God the Father as is the very Son of God Himself. Let it be counted folly or frenzy or fury or whatsoever. It is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered; that God made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God."

While the Reformation thus witnesses to this central doctrine in the complete agreement of all its confessions, which, springing up amidst the most diverse races, reproduce exactly the same features of distrust in the creature and adoring confidence in the Divine Saviour, it finds also a different seal in the testimonies which come from the opposite camp. Thus in the Romish Church, a portion of the Council of Trent side with Luther, and strive to turn the tide. Their greatest theologian, Bellarmine, after he had argued against all the Reformers in defence of human merits, winds up with the confession, "From the uncertainty of our own righteousness and the danger of vain glory, it is safest to put all our trust in the sole mercy and grace of God." And in the Romish Communion, a hundred years after Luther, the Jansenists, with Pascal at their head, contending for grace against Jesuit error, write the brightest page in its entire history. So is it with branches of the Reformation that tend to fall away. There is always some witness that recalls the purer faith. When the Remonstrant movement had agitated Holland, and yet Arminius himself had declared his adherence to Justification as before, the great scholar, Grotius, proved by his writings and deeds that he had not maintained the same integrity; but on his death-bed, when a Lutheran minister had repeated to him the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, he made the touching reply, "I am that Publican. My sole hope rests in Jesus Christ." More than a century later, when the now darkening theology of Holland had obscured the earlier light of grace in the Church of England, and perplexed the manly understanding, as well as over-tasked the earnest nature of Samuel

Johnson, we find him up to a late period of his life holding this discouraging strain, "No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation . . . I have made no approaches to a state, which can look upon death as not terrible." Happily a more cheering system dawned on him; and his biographer tells us that "before his death all his fears were calmed, and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith and his trust in the merits and propitiation of Jesus Christ."

§ 3. A few words may now be added on the recovery of this doctrine in the Reformation Churches. As we hold the recovery of Bible doctrine in the Reformation, a seal of its truth, not less is the return of Reformation doctrine here, in its old fields, a sign of its divinity. The Reformation had very greatly spent its force in Europe by the end of the seventeenth century—succeeded, when not by repression and suffocation, by stagnation, formalism, unbelief. The dawn is reserved till the next century; but a wonderful streak appears in the *Pilgrim's Progress*—itself a child of the Reformation, passing directly from the soul of Luther into Bunyan, and going forth ultimately into all the world. Around this despised birth of an unripe age, the storms of Deism and other destructive doubt prevail for half a century, till following the less effectual Pietistic movement in Germany, there comes the mighty Methodist awakening in England. This also is a direct fruit of the Reformation, the crisis in the soul of Wesley being decided by Luther's Preface to the Romans, and the first lesson-book of his early faith being the German hymns which he translated at Herrnhut, as for example the great one of Rothe—

“ O Love, thou bottomless abyss,
My sins are swallowed up in Thee ;
Covered is my unrighteousness,
No spot of guilt remains in me
While Jesus' blood through earth and skies
Mercy, free, boundless, mercy cries.”

With the parallel movement in the soul of Whitefield, the tremor went forth to the New World. The thrill of his preaching is said to have been the first emotion that bound the children of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the settlers in the south, in the sense of unity ; and in America itself, one of the world's great witnesses to justification arose in Jonathan Edwards, whose sermons on this point head the great series of revivals, and who comes to this experience not by a conversion like Augustine or Luther, or by a Damascus journey like Paul, but takes it in from youth, as given with every idea of God, and moral order, and sin, which enters into his theology.

Slowly but surely the movement rises, quickening in England the older Non-Conformity, and restoring in the Church of England, through names like Newton, Cowper, Wilberforce, and many more, the older Reformation theology, till, in the end of the century, missions arise and confirm the scheme of grace to which they are due.

Do I need to recall the contemporary struggles of our Reformation doctrine in Scotland, passing from last century into this, till, in the soul of Chalmers, the same great birth links itself on to the series, and in the expulsive force of a new affection, faith records its victory.

The Continent also, with its revival over almost its whole surface, renews the conflict, wresting from

Rationalism its chosen watchwords. If there be any change, at most it is in gathering the battle more around a living Christ than a doctrine or a formula ; and an immense activity on the intellectual side, though too little on the practical, reveals itself in connection with every topic of salvation, and with this central one most of all.

In the midst of this struggle at home and abroad we all move. I do not know any doctrine of justification which is to keep the field save this, now reinforced by so many recent triumphs, and stronger than ever in its older memories. To what Church are we to turn, if we go back from this ? We cannot go back to Rome, for if we are to begin with holiness and not with pardon, the difficulties of interpretation should be smoothed over by something better than infallible authority, and we should need better vouchers for the exclusive channel of consecration. Nor can we strike into a line divergent from the Reformation Churches, as here they all agree, and nothing agrees in the claim to take their place, except some vague assertion of progress, which holds that justifying faith is the spirit of works. If this is, after all, faith in the work of Christ, it is our own doctrine, only in a haze ; if it is faith in our own work, as in any way co-ordinate, we can neither go back to it, nor forward without renouncing the whole gospel.

Let me, in closing, impress upon others, as upon myself, that this is not a mere question of speculative theology, or even of Scripture interpretation. It is the gravest and most serious practical question which any of us can ever have to face—the question whether at the bar of God we are ourselves absolved

through the merits of Christ, or are still under condemnation. This doctrine comes down to us in the experience of others, with the marks upon it of pain and anxiety, of heart-piercing trouble and agitation, leaving a record which never can be obliterated. It is not right in us to treat it wholly with curious interest. Some little time ago, in a fishing village on the rock-bound East Coast, at the end of a religious service, a public celebration was made to include an exhibition of the life-saving apparatus. It was interesting and instructive, but the rocket was fired so as to reach neither tossing wreck nor clinging crew; and the youths drawn across the ropes were not even suspended above the peaceful sea, but over a green and smiling valley. How different it would have been amid the roar of the tempest and the lashing of the sea—the awfulness of real peril, and the risk at every point of mistake or failure! But such is actual salvation in every rescue from sin and death, when the soul abandons its guilty past, and commits itself to the untried element of faith bridging earth and heaven! Happy are those indeed, who understand,—but those alone understand who have made the venture,—and who can say, “I know whom I have believed!” Then no ungodliness can condemn, no shipwreck can destroy; the salvation lies in Him who has established the connection, and who secures the transit, and who has made good His own promise, “He that believeth on Me shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life!”—*Amen.*

XVII

THE UNWRITTEN AND THE WRITTEN LIFE OF CHRIST

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book : but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through His name.”—JOHN xx. 30, 31.

THE authorship of this book has in recent times been denied to the Apostle John ; and a keen controversy has been waged on the subject. But this has only brought out with overpowering strength, the arguments for the received opinion, which is that the gospel was written by the apostle in his old age, towards the end of the first century, or beginning of the second, when he had long dwelt in Asia Minor. This was the unanimous opinion of the early Christian fathers, who lived in the second century, and were acquainted with all Christian learning, for it is not only quoted within fifty or sixty years after its supposed origin, but it is mentioned by name, in not many years more, as the work of John ; and the testimony of others is summed up in that of Clement of Alexandria—a great Christian teacher—by the end of that century, that John produced a gospel which, in comparison of the others, he calls

“Spiritual.”¹ The early heretics also received this gospel; and quotations of it are found in the fragments of their writings which remain. These conclusions have never been seriously questioned till our own century; but it is worthy of notice that only the more extreme rationalists have gone so far; while even they have sometimes wavered, or have contradicted each other, and have all of them wholly failed to explain why, if this book were not the work of the apostle John, it came to be laid in his name and to have such a reception. Indeed it is necessary for rationalism to reject this common view of the authorship of the gospel, for if the work be that of an eye-witness and of an apostle of Christ, the course of rationalism is soon ended, and it has to become Christian or to go over consistently to more extreme negation. But the Christian Church having once vindicated this great treasure, has to use it; and we cannot find a better account of the use to which to put it than to accept its own inspired guidance, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” It would be easy to illustrate the use of this gospel by itself alone, as here stated; but I shall give the subject a somewhat wider compass so as to include the other gospels; and shall now consider, first, the Unwritten, and then the Written and Recorded Life of Christ our Lord and Saviour. Let us then look, *first*, at what may be called the Unwritten Life of Christ.

I. § 1. The *first* remark suggested by this text is,

Euseb. vi. 14.

that the unwritten life of Christ is very extensive. It is so by the very conditions of biography. All biography is a fragment. The brief epitaph in an obscure churchyard is a biography; but the fullest record in diaries, letters, and narrative, is no more a complete biography, than that scanty epitaph. The idlest life, were all written, would require a long chronicle, how much more the busiest! It is thus evident, that by the very laws of biography, the gospels must be each a selection, for an entire report would have overwhelmed alike the faculties of writers and of readers. But it is evidently, beyond this necessity, a matter of choice with the evangelists to be selective. The long period between our Lord's infancy and His public ministry is almost passed over, and in His ministry there are great blanks. He is believed to have laboured more than three years; but His recorded discourses might have been spoken in a few weeks. Not more than thirty or forty of His miracles are preserved; and often the names of places and persons are omitted. This clearly appears in connection with the text. It belongs to the life of Christ after His resurrection, which is narrated with comparative fulness; yet here we are told that He did then, many other things not written; and in the close of the next chapter, the strong statement is made in regard to our Lord's whole career, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." We often forget the limited nature of these records. Many difficulties have been raised, and objections taken, which are due entirely to our ignorance. We should remember this, and

give the cause of Christ the benefit of it. Unless we are quite certain, that on any point no further light could be thrown, we must give a record so wonderful the fair play which is not denied to the very teachers of delusion and of error.

§ 2. We may remark that the unwritten life of Christ *must have been profoundly interesting*. We cannot suppose that anything can have been so interesting as the Saviour's Birth, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension. But how much may lie hid that approaches them in interest. Let us see how much is related by one evangelist only. How much poorer would our Lord's life have been had we wanted what Matthew alone gives us of the Star and the Wise Men—of much of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the Parables, and of many features in the Galilean ministry and last scenes at Jerusalem! Would not a star have fallen from heaven, had we wanted in Luke the Song of the Angels, the Woman that was a Sinner, the good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Thief on the Cross, the Emmaus journey, and the Ascension of our Lord from Bethany? By far the largest part of the fourth gospel is new. Is there nothing left out, like the story of Nicodemus, the Woman of Samaria, the discourse on the Bread of Life, and the Good Shepherd, the Washing of the Disciples' Feet, or the Last Charge to Peter? Let no one say that if there had been much of interest, it would have been revealed. Heaven has its disclosures as well as earth. We stand in relation to these as to the Southern Cross, and other constellations at the Antipodes. To behold them we must cross the line; and

here it is the line of death. Then only will the history of Jesus stand revealed, in all its transcendent wealth of wonder and glory, as it was fully lived out here below !

§ 3. The *third* and last remark, which I here make, is that *our Lord's unwritten life was divinely useful*. We too often measure usefulness by the length of chronicles. We thrust publicity on many events that flourish better in the shade, and God ere long restores them to it. Everything lives in the glare. The man who has not a biography or frequent notice in the newspapers has lived in vain. What a rebuke to this insatiable hankering after endless publicity, is the severely simple record of the life of Jesus Christ ! Who among the greatest, even of His true servants, has ever done such works, or spoken such words as here are wholly passed over without record ? We thus see that the true fame is God's approval, that it is enough for us to live "as in our great Taskmaster's eye," and to say, "Surely my work is with the Lord, and my judgment with my God." These unwritten passages of our Lord's history partook fully of the usefulness of the whole. His unrecorded works confirmed or awakened faith. His unpreserved words saved souls. He thus fulfilled all righteousness, and could utter the great testimony as to the work of life and of death, "It is finished." What a lesson to us of self-forgetfulness, and of working in the spirit of the saying, "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." Christ's usefulness will thus image ours as a part of the great Universal Church, whose history repeats His own. In the ultimate effect of Christ's life everything tells, as the forest by its general impression, as well as by its outstanding trees ; and so in the ultimate effect of Christian life

and work no true member but helps the body. How much depends in the family, in the congregation, in the Church at large on work which has no human chronicle, and which yet lives in posterity and will live till the end of time. The soil is fructified, the air etherealised, not only by the memories of the departed, but by a rarer essence which remains when memory has passed away. Let us live thus to Christ and to God, and we shall not want remembrance. If not in the foreground of the picture, we shall be in the background. If not even in the background, we shall be like the frame, and if not even like the frame, we shall be like the wall against which the picture hangs. We shall assist the mighty tread of God's sacramental host, which conquers time; and when we rest from our labours, our works shall follow us!

II. Let us now turn to the *second* part of this subject, which bears on Christ's actually written life, as we have it, not in one evangelist, but in all, and its divinely-intended uses. These uses are declared to be *two*: *first*, to *produce faith*, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"; and *secondly*, to *minister life*, "And that believing ye might have life through His name."

§ 1. *First*, then, the gospel narratives are intended to *produce faith*. This may mean that they teach us *what we are to believe*. This is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is the creed of Christians, as distinguished from Jews, Mahometans, and Infidels; and no doubt it is a most important truth that this is taught in the four gospels. But I do not enter into this question of what the true belief is. I take the other meaning of the words, that the four gospels show us *why we are to believe*

this. In other words, they not only state our belief, but give us reasons for it. And I have now to ask what reasons we find in the history of Jesus, as written in the gospels, for believing Him to have been the Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers, and also the Son of God. Now, I find in these gospel histories, *three* kinds of evidence or argument for our believing in Jesus, according to His own claims, as the Divine Messiah and Saviour.

(1) *First*, the gospel histories prove the claims of Jesus *by the miracles which they show Him to have wrought*. Much has been said in our day against miracles ; but nothing new ; and we have just to repeat the old arguments. One thing said is, that miracles are impossible ; then, if so, God is impossible ; for if nature is His work, He must surely be able to end it, or to bend it ; and that is just to work a miracle. One other thing is, that a miracle, even if it happened, could prove nothing. But the common sense of men has always gone the other way, with Nicodemus, "No man can do these miracles which Thou doest, except God be with him." And if God be with the worker of miracles, it is a pretty sure proof of his doctrine, unless God can support a falsehood. But the last objection is, that miracles have never really happened. Granting that they are possible and prove doctrine, we have no proof of themselves. Here, now, come in the gospel narratives, and specially this fourth gospel ; for it tells us that Jesus wrought many and great miracles. Who can be a better witness than the apostle John, who, I showed in the introduction, is the writer of this gospel ? Was he not intelligent enough, having been able to write a Book which has impressed the whole

world? And was he not honest enough, whose transparent sincerity touches every reader? What then does he testify? He had seen the water turned into wine. He had seen the man born blind healed. He had seen Lazarus raised from the dead. Nay, he had been at the bottom of the empty grave of Jesus; and had seen Him, repeatedly and in familiar intercourse, alive after His death. What then is to be made of this? Nothing is left but to deny,—as has been done, but as never was done before,—that the writer was an eye-witness. Thus we see that these writers do not believe their own teaching, when they say that a miracle is impossible or proves nothing. Then it does not matter who the writer was, for in that case it would be all the same. But their very zeal to remove the witness out of court, shows how much they regard his testimony; and thus we see how reasonably Christians act in believing on such evidence that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

(2) The gospel histories prove the claims of Jesus by *the prophecies which they evidence as fulfilled in Him*. Christ might have come without prophecy; and still He would have been the Son of God and the Saviour. The prophecies only needed to be fulfilled, because God had given His word, and because He had seen meet to send His Son in this way. There is no greater difficulty in believing a prophecy than a miracle; indeed, a prophecy is only another kind of miracle—a miracle of knowledge. The only question then is: Have things been fulfilled in Jesus, which were written before, and which could not have been foreseen without divine revelation? With regard to the early writing of the prophecies, we are in a greatly more favourable position as

Christians than those who lived in last century. The leading opponents of Christianity then denied that anything looking like prophecies of a great Deliverer were in the Old Testament, or were applied to any Messiah by the Jews before Jesus came. But in our day the leading opponents of Christianity grant this ; and even grant that Jesus looked so like a fulfiller of these prophecies, that His disciples exalted Him to Messiahship and even Deity. The question then is just narrowed to this point : Were these Old Testament utterances, thus granted to have pre-existed, and to have been long before applied to a Messiah, actually fulfilled in Jesus ? The gospels, as we have them, come in here to prove this. Is it not clear from them that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as Micah (v. 2) declares, and as the Jews expected. Our opponents deny this, and say He was born in Nazareth ; but how could they know so well as the evangelists ? Is it not clear that He claimed to be the Son of David, as the whole Old Testament indicates ? Some of them admit that Jesus did this, and how could He be mistaken, while those who deny it, fight not only with the evangelists, but with their own brethren. At any rate He was a son of Abraham, and as many of them admit that Jesus was a benefactor of the whole world, is not this very like a fulfilled prophecy, that in Abraham's seed all nations should be blessed ? It is granted by most that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, as Zech. ix. 9 foreshadows ; and though the miracles apparently fore-announced in Isaiah xxxv. 5 are rejected, they cannot deny that Christ claimed them, and was believed to work them, however hard their denial bears on the intelligence and the honesty which the

best of them allow Him to have possessed. Above all, they grant the wonderfully meek and gentle character, which Isaiah has so vividly sketched ; and the most eminent of recent unbelievers has granted that Jesus applied to Himself the 53rd of Isaiah, and in terms of it foretold again His own death. There is much besides of the same kind in the gospels that I cannot notice—many things written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Him ; and, besides, there is the fact that Jesus in turn prophesies, as in regard to His resurrection—the spread of His own gospel—the desolation of Jerusalem, and other points which history has fulfilled ; so that the question arises, How, if this be not true, it looks so like truth ? Where is there any other religious teacher, who thus walks about with a halo of prophecy around him ? The Mahometans have no prophecy, or one poor shadow of it, in which they claim for their founder to be the Comforter promised by Jesus. The Jews have an Old Testament, but as yet no fulfilment of it, save in their own dispersion. But Christians have both an Old Testament and a New. We have the two halves of the tally which correspond. We have the lock, and the key which opens it. The history of the world has gone in our favour, and is going more every day, as the grain of mustard-seed grows into a tree, and as the leaven leavens the lump ; and, therefore, with these gospels in our hand, and with Jesus the goal of the past and the starting-point of the future, we accept with joy and gratitude the lesson they were written to teach, that He is the Christ, and the Son of God.

(3) *Thirdly*, it has to be added, that the gospel

histories *prove the claims of Jesus by His own self-evident greatness*. If all miracle and all prophecy gathered like a mysterious decoration on the brows of imbecility or triviality, we should feel our moral sense perplexed and outraged. But all other evidences of the greatness of Jesus are far outshone by His own intrinsic splendour. When the wise men were led by the star of miracle, or the shepherds came to the manger led by the finger of prophecy, they could not see the greatness of the divine Child as we now see it. The Child was wrapped in swaddling-bands ; but now in the gospels the Child has grown up and walked abroad. We are like Peter and those who have kept company with Him, and beheld His glory. The sunrise gilding the sky, has been succeeded by the sun shining in his strength ; and the glory is as of the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. This total impression of the gospel history is what now convinces the Church, and even overawes the world. Look at the character of Jesus Christ. Who has been able to find a blot in it? We have the most opposite qualities combined, strictness and tenderness, courage and gentleness, self-assertion and self-forgetfulness, zeal and compassion, the most absorbing communion with God and the most brotherly society with men, an unclouded mind in the cloudiest sky, work without friction, conflict without irritation, the purest mirror of conscience, and yet the deepest fount of love. How great is Christ when declaring His offices ! Does He speak as a Prophet? "I am the Light of the world : he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Does He speak as a Priest? "The Son of Man came not to be minis-

tered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." Does He speak as a King? "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." Christ everywhere founds His promises upon Himself and draws His followers to Himself. "Learn of Me"; "Abide in Me"; "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The only objection to His greatness is that to some He seems to claim too much. It is fatal to His greatness, if He be only man, but essential to it, if He be also God. And this is the most wonderful thing in all the gospels, that the divine and human in Him blend without confusion, in a way which our theology cannot explain, but which our faith can and must receive. Thus at one moment, He is asleep in the storm, and the next, rebukes it, "Peace, be still!" At one moment, He is shedding tears by the grave of Lazarus, and the next, He is uttering the word, "Lazarus, come forth." At one moment, He is blessing His disciples with outstretched hands, and the next, He is parted from them, and carried up into heaven. Men may make nothing of this as, alas, many do; and to others it may bring only a transient reverence—the charm of a painting, the music of a hymn or an oratorio. But to the living Church of God, the mystery which these gospels open up is the most divine of all realities—the very reality which has given life to their own souls; and in the sense of it they feel how little any human criticism can avail against these glorious records, and their great central figure. The clouds soon

pass : and the sun again shines as sweetly, almost more pathetically, through the mist and rain. The lake has been ruffled, but the great image again is reflected, even in its broken surface. The birds of song reappear ; and the work of the Church and of the world is taken up anew under that light which alone can cheer the heart of sin and care, and lead to a brighter and endless day. This is the victory that overcometh—may it be ours, and we shall ask nothing greater : for Christ is already with and in all those who thus see Him as He is !

§ 2. The *second* use of these gospel records would now demand our attention, which is, *that they minister life*, as is said, “ And that believing, ye might have life through His name.” Here only a few words can be added.

It is worthy of notice that even the lowest kind of life, that which is merely physical and earthly, is helped by the history, example, and influence of Jesus Christ. He Himself blessed men's bodies, as a kind of image of, and preparation for, the deeper blessing He had in reserve for their souls. Now the Church continues this work, and though not armed with His power of miracle, is doing more at this day, than ever was done before, to preserve, enlarge, and bless the mere physical life of man. It is doing more than all other remedial agencies to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and to strike at the very roots of all the sins and vices which wear out life and induce decay and death. Take Christ away, out of the gospels and out of the world, and you see how, as He goes out, death comes in. In heathen lands you light again the widow's pile, and restore infanticide ; and nearer home you give a new

license to intemperance and to lust ; you break down the law of the Sabbath, and doom the millions to be ground in endless labour. You give a fresh lease to war, with no Christ-like face to come between the combatants and stay their fury. You urge on suicide by making life more miserable and less sacred. You introduce at every point some element of death, and your gospel takes the place of Christ's, " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Such is the best hope of unbelief, such the millennium which secularism in its blindness and against its will is seeking to introduce. But while Christ thus retrieves, conserves, and exalts the life that now is, His greatest blessing is the life that is spiritual, here begun and gloriously prolonged in the life to come. There is the life of *knowledge*, according to Christ's own words, " This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." There is the life of *pardon*, where the condemned sinner receives a legal title to live, through the Lord our Righteousness. There is the life of *regeneration and sanctification*, whereby those who were dead in trespasses and sins rise with Christ and walk in newness of life. There is the *life of eternal blessedness*, which is the consummation of all the rest, according to the promise, " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life !" Now life in all these forms, and to this vast extent, comes through Christ's name, as set before us in the gospel records, and as these, in the hand of Christ's Spirit, are applied to the souls of men ; for is there so much as one, who can thus know Christ and not live through Him, who can be still shut up in the dungeon of condemnation, who can remain the slave of sin or fail to

look and prepare for glory, honour, and immortality? The great adversary of the souls of men knows how fatal to his kingdom this knowledge of Christ is, and therefore in all regions he fights against it; but fights with the energy of despair; and in ever-widening circuits, in ever-brightening irradiations, this name goes forth, till ignorance melts away in light, till unbelief passes with grief and yet with joy into faith, till the number of the saved by faith in every land is complete, and till Christ sees Himself surrounded with the monuments of His resurrection power so as to fulfil the words, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly!"

It is sometimes asked, Why can I not be saved without faith? I answer, Look to this text and see the reason. Is a man saved who knows nothing of Christ and of God in Him, nay, who refuses this knowledge? It is an impossibility. Salvation lies in the very thing that you seek to get without it. Knowledge of Christ, likeness to Christ, sympathy with Christ: this is salvation; and how can it exist without knowing Him and believing in Him. Go and get health without wholeness, sanity without being sane, and fulness without being filled, and you may have salvation without faith, *i.e.* salvation without salvation. Faith makes all the difference between Heaven and Hell, not by a mere act of God's will, but by the very nature of the case. You must enter at this strait gate, if you are ever to enter at all; for there is only one Heaven, that where Christ is believed in, loved, and glorified; and you cannot think of any life for sinners there, which is not through His name.—*Amen.*

XVIII

THE DELIGHTSOME LAND

“Ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.”—

MALACHI iii. 12.

IT so falls out in the Providence of God that the day of our communion is the day appointed by the Synod of our Church, for the enforcement from the pulpit, and for the remembrance in prayer, of the important subject of revival of religion. It is necessary to secure harmony with our brethren that our thoughts should be this day directed to the work of the Holy Spirit as well as to the sacrifice of the Saviour. The two indeed are vitally connected, for it is the office of the Spirit to glorify Christ; and every view we take of the revival of religion leads us back to the cross. If we dwell upon the dark and morbid features of our times which call for cure and renovation, we are conducted back to the great Physician whose blood is the only remedy. If we narrate instances of recovery, we but point to the stretching forth of His hand to heal. Or if we picture a fully convalescent and re-invigorated state of the spiritual body, we not less exalt Him whose grace and love has wrought the change. All is of God by Jesus

Christ; and to Him the glory is in the Church throughout all ages world without end. Perhaps there is hardly a more beautiful, and at the same time more compendious, description of the effects of Christ's gospel in a country than the words of the text; and it may serve in some measure the end contemplated if, without any attempt to exhaust the subject, I at this time simply set before you some of the aspects of the state of religion in a land, which would warrant the fervent eulogium of the prophet, "Ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts." This contemplation may have some tendency by God's blessing to bring about the desired result, or at least it may teach us our deficiencies and lead us in prayer to that Almighty Saviour who alone can work all our works in us.

It is not necessary to inquire minutely into the original application of these words, whether spoken to ancient Israel, or to that Christian Church of which Israel was a type, whether addressed to a nation in its national capacity, or to the Christian Church as a separate nation—the nation that keepeth the truth. Such critical questions are foreign to this occasion. Enough that Christianity belongs to countries as well as individuals: and that the Church acts mightily upon every land to make it delightsome. It is more pertinent to observe that the promise follows a description of the efficacy of prayer, and includes the full blessing which God can pour out upon any people.

What then are some of the heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus necessary to make any land, effectual to make this land of ours, delightsome in the eyes of the Lord of Hosts? To this question I shall now attempt an answer.

§ 1. I observe, *first*, that a land is delightful *which is purely and adequately supplied with Christ's gospel*. The eye of the Christian in surveying any tract of country looks upon it very differently from the man of the world. It is a delightful land to the tourist if the scenery be fine and the air pure, and if in his rapid passage through it his sense of the picturesque be amply gratified. It is a delightful land to the economist if trade and commerce flourish even beneath a canopy of smoke, and if all social arrangements tend to the accumulation of capital. And to the mere worldly philanthropist the land is delightful, where employment is good, pauperism low, laws reasonably fair and equal, and the refinements of civilisation widely spread over the surface of the people. To the disciple of Jesus Christ a different standard everywhere presents itself. As to him the life is more than meat and the body than raiment, so the soul is of infinitely greater moment than the body: and the spiritual aspect of every community first engrosses his attention and sympathies. It is to him nothing that "every prospect pleases," if "only man is vile"; and he cannot accept man, even clothed and fed and civilised, enriched by industry, and refined by education, as making the moral landscape lovely and delightful. To him the radical want is the gospel—the gospel with its humbling discoveries of man's fallen and lost estate by nature, and with its blessed proclamation of recovery by Christ. Without this the people sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. There is no pardon for their sins, no comfort for their sorrows, no return to the image of God, or meetness for death, judgment, and eternity. The awful words hold true,

“Where there is no vision the people perish.” This is most surely believed by us, brethren, in theory : but, is it realised and laid to heart ? Is it realised and laid to heart in regard to our own land ? To it the words apply not less than to any gloomy waste of heathenism : “How shall they hear without a preacher ?” How shall they be saved without a pure and adequate dispensation of the word of life ? This will not of itself save men ; but it is impiety and presumption to expect that they will be saved without it. Now who will maintain that the professed supply of the gospel to our country is either adequate or pure ? Gratefully must we acknowledge the mercies of the Lord in the comparative extent and excellence of the supply of the means of salvation in our days to many parts of our country. But did we maintain that the supply was adequate, we should offend against the clearest statistics ; did we allow that it was pure, we should violate truth without saving charity. No. There are vast multitudes for whom no means of salvation exist ; and the mind trembles to contemplate the number of those to whom that is presented as the gospel, which is another gospel, a corruption of the gospel of Christ, and incapable of yielding the fruits of salvation. Our land presents the appearance of a field, part of which is totally uncultivated, another part sown with tares, and only a portion subjected to such husbandry as can be expected to yield the harvest of eternal life. A delightsome land we shall not be till this famine of the word of God have everywhere come to an end—till not only, in city and town and hamlet, all that have ears to hear may hear, but may rest assured of hearing the same glad tidings of great joy

—till the whole country be vocal with the echoes of salvation, so that none shall miss or mistake the sound—till Christ be everywhere exalted as high in the eyes of men on earth, as He is in the eyes of saints and angels in glory ; and not a soul shall be born into this land of ours or pass from it by death, which has not had set before it the means of the second birth and of thus entering into the kingdom of heaven ! Ah, how far may this day be still distant ! Be it ours to speed it by our efforts and prayers ! Till then our land cannot be delightsome. Its other beauties resemble the fair scenery that sometimes decks the sepulchre. It is still the place of graves, and there is no voice to awake the dead !

§ 2. In the *second* place, I observe, that a land is delightsome which rightly *prizes Christ's ordinances*. Experience has shown that the gospel may be faithfully preached and the other ordinances of Christ purely observed, without that wide and general interest being displayed in them, which their unspeakable importance demands. The old complaint of the prophet has never ceased, "Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?" While it is certainly true that in proportion to the multiplication of gospel agencies spiritual blessing follows as a general rule, it by no means follows to the degree that ought to have been witnessed. In fact, the Bible account of man's depravity would not be true, if man eagerly and universally accepted the proffered remedy, for it would show that there was more lingering good in his nature than had been asserted. Hence the sad fact of neglect even of the great salvation, neglect which only the Spirit of God can overcome—a neglect which expresses and

registers itself by man's treatment of the ordinances of salvation. The worst is not apparent, at least cannot be counted and measured. We can tell how many millions sitting within the reach of the Christian sanctuary refuse to rise up and enter it. But who can follow the outwardly devout to their dwellings and record what proportion refuse to honour God there? Who can pursue them to their closets, and see how many or how few walk with God and live in the presence of Christ? A delightful land would be a land where every citizen was a worshipper, where the voice of praise regularly blended with the hum of the great city, and broke the quiet of the rural vale, where Christ was followed into the wilderness, and each heart had its daily solitude in which it poured itself out to God! Let us only think of another ordinance of God, that which He has appointed as a sign between every nation and Himself, which enshrines the memories of Eden and of Calvary, and rises as a ladder between earth and heaven. Can that be a delightful land to God, which widely tramples on this sign, annuls its sacredness, and when on the chosen day the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings, wraps itself in the clouds of indifference or sin so as to frustrate His shining, and repel His heavenly guidance? Or take one ordinance more—the communion table, which Christ has spread as the chosen memorial of His dying love—as the medium of the most endearing communion with Himself—as the grand rallying centre of His genuine people and the badge of their separation from the world. Would it be too much to expect that every adult should be a communicant, that every one whom Christ remembered should remember Him—that

every one included in His dying love should confess Him that died? Surely our land will not be a delightsome land while the number of Christ's witnesses continues in proportion so small, nay, while so many of the baptized—the children of the Church—even after all instruction in regard to their privilege, refuse to sue it out, and are only conspicuous by their absence from the feast of love! But this state of things shall have an end. Days shall dawn on this land of ours brighter than any of which our fathers have told us in regard to all Christ's ordinances. A new spirit of life shall breathe over the sanctuary, and at once multiply and solemnise the worshippers, extending its vitalising influence to the domestic altar, the closet, and the prayer meeting. The Sabbath shall be holier than it was in the best days of old, subduing into stillness the stir of a mightier industry and the pulse of a more fervid commerce. The most thrilling traditions and recollections of communion solemnities shall be exceeded, for the guests shall be more numerous and the joy more deep and full. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

§ 3. I observe that the land is delightsome *which multiplies examples of Christ's converting grace*. Take away conversion and you take away Christianity. The two watchwords of evangelical religion are both contained in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus. The one is the atonement; the other is the second birth. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," and "Except a man be born of

water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." With regard to the mode of conversion, it is confessedly various. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." From the gentle breath of impression to the full tempest of agitation and excitement the wind blows, melting the icy heart, and making old things pass away. The time may come, as some anticipate, when conversion shall be generally noiseless and gradual, effected in the early dawn of life, as the result of pious training, when the Spirit of God shall copiously descend as morning dew, and leave a blessing for all the coming day. Doubtless the land would be delightful in which changes were wrought, however silently, for the fruits would bear witness and there would be nothing covered that was not revealed and hid that was not known. Nevertheless this day, if it ever come, is yet far distant; and our land must become delightful, in the first instance, by conversions of a very different type and character. Multitudes whose conversion we may hope for (and indeed recent experiences have taught us not to limit the grace of God to any age or previous disposition) have passed the stage, when grace unfolds itself almost as one with nature. They are instructed but not converted. They know the gospel by the hearing of the ear, but their eye has not seen it. They are strangers to its godly sorrow, its melting tenderness, its bursting joy. Others, without having openly broken with the gospel, secretly loathe and hate it. And others, again, have cast off all the restraints of pious influence and openly crucify the Son of God afresh. To all these classes, and others that might be named—belonging more decidedly to the outcast and neglected—conversion cannot come as a gentle

and placid wave of light, illuminating all things but disturbing none. It must come as a wave of the sea with a shock and an agitation, making the soul mount to the heavens and go down again to the depths and melt away because of trouble. There must be a struggle between the old and the new—between self and Christ, between the pleasures of the world and of sin, and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The soul in such a conflict may be expected to be shaken to its centre, with fear and shame and sadness, ere faith come to its relief, and love toward the Crucified One gain the victory. This is the process from which thousands in all ages have emerged, with hell and heaven no longer words but realities—with salvation no longer a speculation but an experience, and Christ no more a distant shadow whether clothed in the garb of a Friend or an Avenger, but a living Redeemer, enshrined in the heart the hope of glory! Not by might or by power is this change effected, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts, and it is of all things the most blessed, for it truly saves by connecting with the Saviour, by forming the character after His, and by preparing the soul for the stupendous issues of eternity. The conversions which are going on within the circle of Christian influence make up the true history of the world. They are the events which are noted in the register of God, where the ordinary incidents of human history have no place. As we gaze from the deck of a vessel upon the play of the waves in mid-ocean and learn nothing, since the spectacle is one of the most monotonous in existence, being endless change without progress, but are stirred into deepest excitement and joy when a human being is seen struggling

amongst these waves and is at length rescued, so may we suppose God or Christ to look upon the play of ordinary history as contrasted with the work of conversion. Why indeed are nations *nations*, but that they may contribute their part to this work? This is the last end of the preservation of the earth with all its regions; and they can only be delightful as they fulfil this their true destiny. It is not the first birth of any man that glorifies God or satisfies Christ. Without the second it is an abortion and a catastrophe. "I say that an untimely birth is better than he: for he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness." No. Unless it be filled with converted souls every land sits in deep shadow, and all its other beauties and glories only enhance the sense of gloom and disappointment. Perhaps you have looked upon the beauties of nature, from the chamber where some dear friend or relative was struggling with dire disease. Their very loveliness only added to the load at your heart; and you inwardly ejaculated, "O how would one returning gleam of health outweigh them all!" So the Christian feels in regard to conversion as the one thing needed to make any land fair and lovely; for this alone removes the sickening contrast, brings man into harmony with all else that is delightful, and casts over all creation the charm of an incomparable beauty and gladness, so that the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands!

§ 4. I observe, *fourthly*, that the land is delightful *which maintains a high and general standard of conformity to the image of Christ*. Conversion is nothing save as a step to sanctification. And sancti-

fication is resemblance to Christ. We have no other measure of it either for one individual or a multitude. The ultimate design of Christ's mission was to multiply Himself ; to stamp Himself upon the minds, hearts, and lives of men. This is the only tangible idea of holiness—conformity of men to the perfect God - man who is the first - born among many brethren. This is religion ; the production of this is the revival of religion, which is but another word for the diffusion of Christianity—the multiplication of those who can say, “I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.” Such a conformity is defective in every case ; for the glories of the Saviour's spiritual character—His love to God and man, His self-denial, His courage, His gentleness, His wisdom, His devotion—leave unspeakably behind the brightest of His followers. Still, under the training of His Spirit, forms of moral loveliness have appeared and are appearing, which differ radically from those which the world saw before Him, or which it is capable of producing where His name is disowned. Many beautiful specimens of pure and lofty Christian virtue have distinguished our own land in the ages that are past ; and in dwelling in the hearts of these saints Christ has had His delights with the sons of men. They have been found in all sections of the visible Church and in all grades of society, from the very highest to the very lowest. Often they have been reclaimed from the darkest vices ; and they have maintained their holiness in the most uncongenial situations—the lily blooming among thorns, the dove found in the clefts of the rock. Those who have occupied prominent places in their own day or have been handed down to posterity form but a small

minority ; and we dare not say that they are the most worthy, for God seeth not as man seeth, and higher graces and virtues may have blossomed in secret, unknown and unrecorded till they appear with Christ in glory ! In our own day the succession is not extinct. Perhaps we may say with deep thanksgiving to God that those who bear Christ's image in all circles are more numerous than at any former period ; and that in the case of those who are eminent for sanctity there has been no decline from a former standard. Now without wishing or daring to arrest even the most advanced at their present mark (for the most eminent require like Paul to forget those things that are behind) would it not be a result of incalculable blessedness, were the higher standard of Christian life found in some to be more widely diffused, still more were a marked and decisive impress of Christian piety to become universal, or to approach to universality ? What a multitude are there in all our Churches, whose likeness to Christ is ambiguous. You cannot disprove it ; but neither can you take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. What a mighty impulse would be given were they only to display as from some hidden depth the struggling features, and be visibly what they profess to be ! Were the breath of the Spirit to bring out the richer and warmer hues of the Christian character, instead of the colder and more neutral tints, as the breath of summer suddenly quickens the reluctant and lingering vegetation of spring, what an outburst of life and beauty would rejoice the Church of God ! The world would be struck and awed with the truthfulness, the temperance, the meekness, the gentleness, the self-forgetfulness of Christ's followers,

while all other virtues were crowned by a commanding spirituality and devotion which pointed to the heaven whence they had descended. The transformation of the professing Church into a visibly living body would certainly act on the world as life from the dead. Christianity in our country at the present day has the immense advantage of being represented in all ranks and classes. There is no rank, profession, or sphere of life, but you can point in it to some eminent Christian ; and in those which seemed most hopeless God has rebuked His people's despair and raised up out of the stones children to Abraham. The influence of the few has been already so great, that we can form some conception of that of the many were the image of Christ in an exalted form to meet the eye at every turn. Why should not our land become delightsome, by a wide and general reproduction of that character on which God looks with complacency, and which is the last result of Christ's redemption? Regenerate character is God's noblest work. Every man around us is impressive as a ruin, how much more as a restored and sanctified child of God. When we think of the varied energies and capabilities that are at work in this land of ours, in a state of alienation from Christ's Church and gospel, our inmost hearts grieve over the loss and sacrifice of such precious materials wherewith to build up the temple of God. How often has the exclamation been heard, "Were such an one a Christian what a lovely character he would be!" What fine and cultured minds wholly expend themselves on the strifes of politics or the researches of literature and science, which, important in their own place, can never content the immortal spirit and

yield no fruit unto life eternal ! What vast energies are absorbed in the pursuit of wealth ! Yea, in all departments of art and industry what intelligence and skill are displayed in conquering the properties of matter and subduing the earth, while the higher soul remains all the while dark and blind, and never turns to expatiate with delight on God's grand contrivance for the recovery of a lost world ! O we would see all these high powers and capacities that make our land at this day glow and burn with intense activity, an activity which can never bring reward but only deeper and more feverish restlessness, raised above the dust and made to kindle with immortality ! We would see the strength of the one sex and the tenderness of the other take one common stamp—the stamp of devotedness to Christ without which strength is weakness, and affection torn from its highest object can only grovel and expire ! What so noble object of desire to a Christian and a patriot as to see this nation a holy nation, a peculiar people ! Is not this worth a lifetime of effort and prayer, to all who love the Saviour, and seek His glory, who are bound too, in conformity with His own directions, to begin at Jerusalem ? Happy the Christian, happy the parent, happy the teacher, happy the minister of the gospel who does what he can, by labour and supplication and example, to stamp on this land the image of Christ, and thus to make it indeed delightful, because Christ looking down from heaven upon it sees in it of the travail of His soul and is satisfied !

§ 5. In the *fifth* and last place, I observe, that *a land is delightful which assists in bringing other lands to Christ*. We cannot doubt that this was one

attraction of ancient Israel to God ; and that therefore His eye was upon that land from the beginning even unto the end of the year. He saw in it the focus of blessing : the central point whence the light of His glory was everywhere to spread till the whole dark orb was illuminated. "All nations shall call you blessed ;" but this was impossible unless all nations were blessed by them ; for such is Christian light, that like that of the sun it cannot be seen except by its own diffused and propagated rays. To transfer this language to our own country, how can Africa, India, China, the South Seas ever call us blessed, unless we teach them our blessedness and make them share it ? They may admire our wealth, they may envy our power, they may bow to our arms ; but they will never count us blessed for our Christianity, until we lead them like ourselves out of darkness into marvellous light. Is not this the work of our age—a work indispensable to make this or any land that calls itself Christian delightful ? The time may come—God grant that it come soon, when nations shall not need thus to give and receive—when the seed transplanted from the few favoured centres where it has been nursed and grown, shall everywhere fill the face of the world with fruit, and when the Lord God shall cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. Happy shall that day be, when embassies of mercy and expeditions of rescue shall be converted into reciprocations of love and exchanges of brotherhood—when the missionary shall give place to the delegate, and the cry, "Come over and help us," be succeeded by songs from the ends of the earth, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Meanwhile our lot has been cast

on another time ; and our responsibilities belong to a state of war more than of peace. That land is even now delightful, and no other, that comes to the help of the Lord against the mighty. From all quarters of the earth the demands on the Christians of this land increase. It has been said that "everywhere the world trembles under the foot of a present Deity ;" and it may be said that the first result of the agitation, in almost every case, is an appeal to this country for spiritual help. Without a revival of religion I do not see how all are to be met. Where are the missionaries to be found?—where the resources to maintain them?—where the prayers that will give impulse to so vast an organisation as must be erected? It is not a day for old measures and standards ; and the amount of piety which has sustained our past missionary system will sustain it no longer. Hence a revival of religion is all-important ; and its echoes will reverberate to the ends of the earth. Is it not delightful to think that already in what God has wrought and is working, some provision is made for this new emergency, and that God is tempering in this fire the weapons that are to be employed in subduing the world to the Saviour? Already we may hope not a few have been won, that are to be hereafter not only the lights and ornaments of our domestic Christianity, but the messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ in other lands ! Around the pool of our British Christianity which the angel of God has thus been stirring, we may conceive a great multitude of other nations, blind, halt, withered, Pagan, Mahometan, and Papal, that have long been waiting in vain, now casting imploring looks, and struggling with less despairing gestures to

reach the means of healing ! Is it not a crisis of unspeakable magnitude and almost unprecedented responsibility ? According to our zeal or our lukewarmness at this time we decide the fate of Christianity not only in our country, but amidst the vast circle of its dependent nations. Perhaps this is speaking too presumptuously ; for God can save by many or by few ; and if we hold our peace at this time deliverance may arise from another quarter. Only our land shall have forfeited its title to be in some sort the joy of the whole earth, and the blessing of them that were ready to perish shall not come upon her ! We shall not predict a conclusion so unwelcome ! We shall not believe that our missionaries who are looking wistfully to the spread and fruits of our revival shall be thus disappointed ! We shall not anticipate that God will suffer His own people so to mistake the signs of His Providence and the leadings of His grace, as not in such a time to arise and cry mightily to Him for this blessing of harvest, that gives at once bread to the eater and seed to the sower in distant regions ! And in this confidence with a heart swelling with hope more than it is oppressed with anxiety, and a tongue loosed to speak of His own signs and mighty wonders, we would repeat in application to our own beloved land the ancient prayer, " God be merciful unto us, and bless us ; and cause His face to shine upon us. That Thy way may be known upon the earth, Thy saving health among all nations. . . . Let the people praise Thee, O God ; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase ; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us ; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him ! "

Let those of us who are this day about to surround the Communion Table ponder the amazing fact of God's delight in His people and in His saints, "The Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation." "The Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." Not, indeed, for their foreseen goodness are they chosen; for they are loved when they are enemies, reconciled by blood, called by grace; yet most true it is, that God's love to His people is also a love of delight in what His grace has wrought in them, a love of rejoicing over them as conformed to the image of His Son, who in His sight is altogether lovely. Say, Were the sun in the heavens a conscious agent, would he not delight most to shine on the waving forest and the verdant mead, though he shone also upon the blighted heath and the sandy waste? Thus is it with the delight of God and of Christ in those whose hearts are softened, whose wills are renewed, and who with truth can say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that we love Thee!" O, if this be indeed our attainment, can we ever sufficiently praise that grace which has made us to differ? And can we find a more powerful argument for revival in religion than this, that every step we take forward awakens new complacency in the breast of Him who spared not His own Son, and in the breast of that Son who freely gave Himself up to the death for us all! Surely we shall this day feel the impulse of this motive to long and pray for greater nearness to the image of Him whose

death we celebrate—that the delight of our gracious Lord and Redeemer in us may be more unalloyed, and that His Spirit may more tenderly witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. For the entrance of that Spirit, we shall unbar our hearts more widely that He may enter in and take full possession, sealing us unto the day of complete redemption and filling us with that sense of a gracious presence which has been thus described :

“’Tis heaven, all heaven, descending on the wings
Of the glad legions of the King of kings ;
’Tis more, ’tis God diffused through every part,
’Tis God Himself triumphant in the heart.”

How mournful the case of those in whom God has no delight, but who “make Him to serve with their sins and weary Him with their iniquities !” You may be much delighted in by others, by parents, relatives, friends, who load you with tokens of their affection. You may have amiable and engaging qualities, for these, we freely grant, may be found in hearts entirely destitute of the love of God and the presence of Christ. But O, if God have no delight in you, what does all avail, for who shall bless whom the Lord hath not blessed ! How can God have delight in you when you are a rebel against His government and a despiser of His Christ ? This annuls and sets aside all that attracts the regard or admiration of men—as David could have no delight in the physical beauty of Absalom when he was up in arms against him, or in the intellectual vigour of Ahithophel when it was employed to subvert his throne ! In God’s eye you are a blot upon His creation ; His earth is weary to bear you ; could the sun withdraw its shining, it would leave you in darkness ; the stars in

their courses would fight against you. Were there but one sinner in this world, his presence would cast over it a dismal shadow. Though hid in the deepest cave, it would infect the air ; though placed upon a desert island far amidst the ocean, it would trouble and afflict all holy men and angels. Your case is pitiable but it is not hopeless. God, who has no delight at all in you, but to whom your life is intensely odious and abominable, refuses to cut you off or sweep you away from the scene which you defile ! The great Shepherd follows you with the yearnings of compassion. His pity for you, even in your sins, suspends His delight in the folded sheep who stray no more, and He leaves them to pursue you into the wilderness. He is seeking you now. He is seeking every one of you in this time of widespread relenting and softening of hearts ! O refuse not His call ! Delay not your return ; for deeply you feel that this is not the manner of man, and that if a man find his enemy, he does not thus pardon him and load him with benefits ! He will lay you upon His shoulders with rejoicing. He will restore you to peace and purity, to harmony with His Father, to harmony with yourself, and with all nature ! Then under His shadow you shall sit with great delight and all shall be delightsome round about you. The storm of vengeance shall be seen retreating and vanishing on the horizon. The arch of heaven shall bend over you in serenity and love. The earth shall smile like opening Paradise. Celestial music shall fill the air ; and yourself the centre of all this bursting gladness, restored to love and loveliness in union to the Saviour, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory !—*Amen.*

XIX

THE EARTHLY SABBATH: A TYPE OF THE HEAVENLY

“There remaineth therefore a rest (Sabbatism) to the people of
God.”—HEB. iv. 9.

IT is in these days a pleasure to find any proposition respecting the Sabbath that is not controverted, and this is one which, so far as I am aware, has never been disputed, that heaven is a perpetual Sabbath. This is what is clearly asserted in this text, for the word translated “rest” is “Sabbatism,” or as it is rendered in the margin, “the keeping of a Sabbath.” This is proved to remain to the people of God in this way, that God, in the 95th Psalm, exhorts Israel to-day to hear His voice, lest they should be excluded from His rest. Now this could not be God’s creation rest, for that was long over, and not a thing to be to-day aspired after; nor could it be the rest of Israel in Canaan, for Joshua (here called Jesus) had given the people this rest many generations before the 95th Psalm was written. It was therefore a rest yet future, or a rest that remained, during the whole time that the Psalm in question could be used; and it would only be fully entered on and enjoyed, when

there was no longer any cause for God to swear, "They shall not enter into My rest." This evidently carries the rest before us forward beyond the reign of unbelief and sin, in other words, fixes it down in its true glory to heaven ; and though I am willing to admit that there is an earthly anticipation or foretaste by faith on the part of believers of this rest in the gospel, yet I agree with the great majority of interpreters in thinking, that the apostle has before his mind more the heavenly Canaan than the gospel Canaan—more the rest of glory than of grace. And the specially interesting thing is, that the future rest which Christians are to seek after by faith, and to be careful not to lose, is a Sabbatism or Sabbath rest ; for in the 9th verse this beautiful word is applied to what is elsewhere in this paragraph spoken of as "rest" in the ordinary sense, and thus we are taught that heaven is Sabbatic, and led to inquire what may be meant by this unusual assertion that "there remaineth a Sabbath-keeping to the people of God." Hence in this discourse I shall endeavour to illustrate Heaven in this peculiar and attractive aspect as a Sabbatism or Sabbath-keeping, which now indeed remaineth, but shall at last be fully come.

The best way therefore, as it seems to me, in which we can conceive of heaven as a Sabbatic state, is to consider what are the ideas associated with the Sabbath below, and then to transfer them, in their highest and purest form, to the heavenly blessedness. This I shall endeavour to do in this discourse.

I. I observe then, in the *first* place, that the heavenly blessedness is Sabbath blessedness because it includes *rest*. The fundamental idea of the Sabbath is rest ; and this is the idea which the

apostle makes most prominent in this place, because he uses "Sabbatism" interchangeably with a word which signifies "cessation" or "repose." But it can never be granted that mere physical or animal rest was the sole or even chief thing enjoined by the Sabbath law under any dispensation. It was the rest of man in God, a rest like that of God, a rest which in man's unfallen state was enjoyed by his working on the same plan and resting in the same spirit with God, and in his fallen state could only be recovered by his return in his whole being to harmony with God and rest in Him. The only Sabbath-keeping on earth that has ever deserved the name is release from the labours and burdens of the soul, and from the labours and burdens of the body as a help to the higher rest. The true Sabbath is entering into God's rest, into participation of His blessedness, and draws with it the surmounting of every hindrance to this result. It is resting from everything that would hinder rest in God, and then it is the enjoying of this rest in Him. This is partially attained by the believer even here. Through faith he rests from unbelief and sin ; he rests from secular toil ; and he rests in some measure from the cares and griefs and sorrows of this mortal state ; and then by the same faith, which has set aside these hindrances and lifted him above them, he rests in God by Jesus Christ. There is therefore a Sabbatism, a divine Sabbatism, enjoyed by the believer even in this life, so as to make good the words, "For he that is entered into His (that is God's) rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from His." He is done with everything that hinders repose, and that repose, like God, he now enjoys. This parallel, however, between

God and the believer, is in the best Sabbath-keeping of earth extremely defective ; and therefore the words demand heaven for their fulfilment. *There* is the true Sabbatism both in regard to its *negative* and its *positive* aspects, both in regard to what is ceased from, and in regard to what is rested in.

There is rest from *sin*. The victory of faith is complete, so complete that faith itself is swallowed up in vision. The law in the members wars no more against the law of the mind. The unbelieving doubts, the disordered affections, the tumultuous passions, the violent temptations which, while they lasted, made rest impossible, have all come to an end, and the soul rising for ever above them all has gone to keep its true Sabbath in the bosom of God. We may have felt, brethren, an influence of the earthly Sabbath upon our minds to lift us above sense and sin, and to give us a blessed respite from the attacks of evil. Now the respite has become perpetual. The truce has risen to a settled and immovable peace, and none of the works of darkness or suggestions of sin and Satan shall trouble us more to all eternity. The victory so long desired, so patiently or rather impatiently waited for, has come at last, and neither lust, nor anger, nor pride, nor self-righteousness, nor any of the dark disturbers of the soul shall ever break or even threaten its heavenly rest.

There is also rest from *sorrow and pain*. The clouds of grief here darken that blessed day.' The violence of pain breaks in upon its sacred hours, and not a few of God's people have spent it in watching the last struggles, or looking upon the faces of their dead. With all its solace and all its rest, the earthly Sabbath cannot drive away care or exclude foreboding ;

and it is rather a prophecy than a fulfilment of repose. But in heaven the Sabbath of rest from all the evils of the curse is complete. There shall be no more pain. There shall be no more sorrow, neither any more crying, neither any more death. The Lord God shall wipe away all tears from all faces, and He that sitteth on the throne shall say, "Behold I make all things new." We may say that these evils are our works, from which we need to rest, works introduced by sin, and following it as its dark shadow, so that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together under the burden. But the new creation at length prevails to set the old free ; and the heavenly Sabbath, with its full and blessed liberty from sorrow as from sin, abides as the witness of this deliverance and the monument of its predestined rest.

There is also rest from *labour and fatigue*. The Sabbath rest on earth, though a blessed, is only a partial cessation of human toil. Many Christians only share it imperfectly, and those who share it most, find that it is itself an imperfect remedy for the curse of labour. The refreshment of the Sabbath does not fully repair the exhaustion of the week. The weariness of the body increases with exertion ; the weariness of the mind with thinking and occupation ; and the Sabbath is only a pause in the march of decay whereby the earthly house of this tabernacle is at length dissolved. Earth has no cure for this evil—all things are full of labour, man cannot utter it ; and it is only in heaven that the activity of motion can be reconciled with the stability of rest. How these opposites are to be united, we cannot here understand, but the glorious result is certain that there effort is followed by no waste and no fatigue—that action and reaction are

no longer equal, and that the very Sabbath almost loses its meaning, being not a rest from anything in employment, but rather a perpetual and blissful union of employment and of rest. Blessed surely are those who thus see Paradise restored and man raised above himself, who shake off the last trace of the bondage of corruption; and being made like God and like Christ, enjoy in body and in mind a participation in the activity of Him who is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever!

These, however, are but the negative aspects of this rest; and these hindrances are only removed that the soul may find its positive and satisfying rest in God and with God. It is in God revealed, reconciled, regained in Christ that the soul finds its last end; and the sense of this, which is Heaven begun on earth, rising to full clearness and joyous certainty above, makes up the true Sabbath of the skies. Every faculty here finds its true centre. The mind rests in clear and final knowledge of God. The heart rests in conscious reconciliation with Him and full return of His affection. The will rests in fixed choice and assured possession of Him as the soul's great portion. There is nothing else, nothing higher, nothing better to know, to seek, or to long for; only more of God, and yet more to all eternity; and as the object infinitely exceeds the faculty, there is thus room for an everlasting Sabbath of complete repose and yet of constant progress in which God is all and in all. The loftiest wish can conceive nothing more Sabbatic than thus to be endlessly filled with all the fulness of God; and hence the deep and ceaseless thanksgiving of every reclaimed and ransomed spirit must be this—

the essence of all its joy, and the burden of all its praise—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!" There is thus that unity and concentration, without which in the world of spirit as of matter there can be no rest; and as the planets all gravitate to the sun, constrained by an overpowering attraction, which in spite of their mutual attractions preserves the stability of the universe, so the souls of the blessed, while attracted to each other, find in God such transcendent and incomparable glories, that they are bound eternally to Him in that rest of love which can receive no higher expression than this, "Whom have we in Heaven but Thee!"

II. I observe, *secondly*, that the heavenly blessedness is Sabbath blessedness because it includes *commemoration*. From the beginning, the Sabbath has had a memorial character. The Paradisaic Sabbath was a memorial of creation; the Jewish Sabbath a memorial of deliverance out of Egypt; the Christian Sabbath a memorial of the Saviour's rising from the dead; and hence the heavenly state would not deserve the name of a Sabbatism, if it had not the same memorial character. Its rest is expressive rest, rest following after great works of God, of which it is the monument and the witness. Of what works then will the heavenly Sabbath be the memorial? It is an interesting question, and one not difficult to answer. Heaven will not be a mere repetition of the creation Sabbath; nor of the creation Sabbath, enlarged and endeared by such a providential sign or memorial of deliverance, as made up the Exodus or Canaan Sabbath of the Old Testament. Nor will it be even a mere repetition

or prolongation of the Resurrection Sabbath of the Christian Church. It will stand in the same relation to that Sabbath of the new creation, in which the exodus Sabbath did to that of the old. It will be a memorial of all the history, of all the gracious Providence, of all the blessed deliverance, and chiefly of the final exodus out of this world for the people of God, that has succeeded the new creation in Christ Jesus. As the rest of Canaan commemorated the gracious Providence of the ancient covenant, so will the rest of the heavenly Canaan at once consummate and commemorate the gracious Providence of the New. What great events will thus find an embodiment and a tongue? The second coming of Christ, the gathering together of the redeemed in Him, the resurrection of the body, the glories and terrors of the final judgment, the introduction of the ransomed to the abodes of immortality! These events make a revolution as great and wonderful, I say not, as the redemption out of Egypt, which was registered merely by the addition of a new reason to the old creation Sabbath,—but as great and wonderful as the death and resurrection of Christ itself, which was registered by a change of the day; and therefore let us not be surprised, that they work a change on the Christian Sabbath, making it henceforth vanish as a special season, and turning all heavenly duration into the keeping of a Sabbath. The deliverance now wrought must have a wider celebration; the gifts and blessings, now bestowed, including the immediate presence of Christ and of God, a larger space for their manifestation and enjoyment; and therefore the Sabbatic river laden with these great memories, not only runs again into a new channel,

but overflows all its banks, and leaves nothing which it does not cover with its tide. And yet all is not new ; but as from the first, this wonderful ordinance finds room for the oldest memories as for the most recent. Like some great pillar carved with successive inscriptions, or shield quartered with various arms, the Sabbath adds on, and yet loses nothing, so that the heavenly Sabbatism enriches itself with all the spoils of the past. The creation Sabbath blends with the celestial, showing the high dignity and sublime destiny of the ransomed, which in Christ are retrieved and even exalted ; and those who owe their all proximately to the Redeemer, yet go back to the same great Lord as their Creator, and celebrate that earlier benefit which fixed the limits of the later, and made it, if vouchsafed at all, so unspeakably glorious, being nothing less than the ransom of immortals, saying as they cast their crowns before Him, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power ; for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure they are and were created !" So also the Sinaitic type is preserved in the heavenly antitype, and the song of Moses mingles with that of the Lamb. And the deep significance of the resurrection Sabbath, so far from being lost or obscured in that of the skies, comes out into fuller light and more commanding grandeur, for heaven is but the development of the finished work of Jesus, and by His resurrection from the dead, all its inhabitants have been begotten to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ! Thus does the Sabbath in all its future expansions and mutations preserve the indelible impress of identity with the past ; and like some bird of

heavenly origin that has descended for a season to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, retains all its ancient notes amidst that flood of new and richer melody which it returns to pour forth everlastingly by the throne of God !

III. *Thirdly* and lastly, I observe that the heavenly blessedness will be Sabbath blessedness because it includes *worship*. The Sabbath has from the first been associated with worship. We read in connection with it of holy convocations and solemn assemblies ; and it is impossible to see how, without worship, it could have been holiness unto the Lord. Nor shall this character fail in the heavenly Sabbath, but rather be carried to its highest degree and consummation. We are dazzled indeed with excess of light when we attempt to explore the heavenly worship. We are unable to tell whether the language is to be taken with absolute literality that there is no temple in the new Jerusalem, and that the worshippers serve day and night before the throne ; or whether, in harmony with these grand generalities expressive of universal sanctity and devotion, there may be some room for the distinction of places and times which seems so much to belong to the constitution of human nature. Without attempting to settle a question too high for us, we may satisfy ourselves with the easier and more useful inquiry, what elements of worship may be supposed to be specially indicated by the Sabbatic title given to the whole services and engagements of the upper sanctuary. And of those which might be chosen, I select three, believing that they lie in the very idea of "a Sabbath-keeping as remaining for the people of God."

(1) *First* then, I think the worship of the heavenly Sabbath will be distinguished by *gratitude*. The very rest enjoyed, the very events commemorated must inspire this feeling. As the Sabbath hymn of Eden recorded the gratitude of the first pair ; as the grateful song of Miriam by the Red Sea struck the keynote of all distinctively Jewish psalms and songs for the Sabbath Day ; as the Christian Church commenced its march to battle and to martyrdom with the gladsome words, "The Lord is risen," and with the lofty strain of resurrection music, "Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" so the Church of the first-born, at length gathered home, rescued from flood and fire and made more than conquerors through Him that loved them, must, when in the Spirit on this higher Lord's Day, renew with deepened ardour the ancient doxology, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Nor am I mistaken in supposing, that while the grateful celebrations of eternity shall be inspired by all the public deliverances and victories of the redeemed as a whole, a special tenderness of sentiment flowing from the recollections of individual history shall mingle with and colour the general stream. For each has records of goodness and mercy that are peculiar ; each has escapes, rescues, conflicts, endurances, triumphs that stir the depths of thankful memory ; and each on that high and secure level of Sabbatic rest attained through grace by unspeakable toil and effort can say, "My foot standeth in an even place ; within the congregations will I bless the Lord." Nor is it only

deliverance and safety, but fruitful labour that awakes the praises of eternity. The saints "rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." The fruits that they could not see here, because they were not grown, because they were obscured by the clouds of detraction and controversy, or because God for wise reasons hid them from their view, they now survey without mistake and without danger, and having sown in tears they reap in joy. Nor is this inconsistent with ceasing from their own works, for these works are rather the works of God wrought in them and by them, so that in reviewing them they rest in God who has not created or redeemed them in vain, and with something of God's own Sabbath rest in redemption, or Christ's sublime joy in seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied, they exclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory!"

(2) I observe, *secondly*, that the worship of the heavenly Sabbath will be distinguished by *sympathy*. Those for whom the heavenly Sabbath remains are "the people of God," not in any narrow, local, or sectional acceptance of the term, but in its widest universality. Already it stirs the heart to think how large is the surface over which the Sabbath call to worship is obeyed. The world-wide institution had once contracted itself to the limits of a people receiving the law amidst the solitudes of an Arabian desert; but now that trumpet call, blended with the gospel jubilee, spurns the boundary of kingdoms and continents, and goes forth to every nation under heaven. Year by year the Sabbath extends the circle of worship; and from plains and rivers and mountains silent all too long, like some ministering

angel, it carries up fresh notes of praise to heaven. The discordant votaries of paganism have no equal to its harmony ; nor is there any festival that so exalts one glorious name. But what will it be when the harvest of the earth is fully reaped, and not in space only, but in time ; when the worshippers are no longer divided but united, one in language and one in heart, gathered from the law and from the gospel, from under the shadow of the altar and of the cross, the saved of every dispensation, the redeemed of every clime, the first of the ransomed commingled with the last, the saints before the flood with the saints after, Abraham with his faithful children, Moses and Elias with the disciples of Jesus, David and Isaiah and Paul with all who have sung their songs, or believed their prophecies, or heard their words, and when every age brings in its trophies, every land sends up its witnesses from its earliest apostle to its latest convert, till amidst the innumerable throng out of all kindreds and tribes and tongues, thought is lost, and feeling overpowered in the swell of the great universal anthem, "Thou alone art worthy !" Blessed are those for whom such a Sabbath is reserved. They may be well contented to be nothing in such an assemblage, while God is exalted, and Christ is all and in all !

(3) *Thirdly* and lastly, I observe that the worship of the heavenly Sabbath will be distinguished by *consecration*. The Sabbath has always looked two ways, not only backward but forward. It has been a rest and a commemoration, but a rest and a commemoration preparatory to holy service. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, the service was first in time, though not in

thought or in impression. From the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world, the rest and remembrance come more visibly first, and the one holy day pledges to the holiness of all that succeed. This more perfect type of Sabbatism is followed in heaven ; and its finished redemption coming before, only binds by the plenitude of its grace to a more absolute and unbroken dedication to God. Who can doubt that in the celestial world there are services and ministries as far above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth ? Heaven is a city, and shall it not have offices and employment for its citizens ? Or shall the great King who is served by angels have no posts and functions for His own children ? A strange ordination this, to collect so much holy activity into one mass, and then leave it inert and useless, to make man by redemption perfect, and then to employ his perfection upon nothing. An idea so contradictory alike to the end of creation and redemption we wholly repudiate, and refuse to tie down good for its energy, to the struggle with evil, and love for its labours and rewards, to the companionship and counteraction of sin and sorrow. Not thus, O immortal Redeemer, does the crown flourish on Thy head, when sin is destroyed and death swallowed up in victory, not in new conflicts or in the simple memory of the past, but in leading Thy flock to living fountains of waters, and amidst scenes of smiling peace opening up new sources of endless joy ! This Thy reward, this Thy blessedness, Thou givest to all Thy followers, each blessing each with new lessons of wisdom, with new testimonies and works of love, while heaven itself is enriched, and God and the Lamb more gloriously served and magnified ! This, O gracious Lord,

be our everlasting Sabbath-work which is Thine own, with all our ransomed powers to fulfil in its countless offices the ministry of love, and to employ an endless rest, and redouble a ceaseless song, in building up yet higher and higher in celestial glory that Church which Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood !

Let me very earnestly impress on all, as on myself, that this Sabbath-keeping only remains for the people of God. They that believe—they only, enter into rest. Even God (let us say it reverently) cannot bring them in by any other way. God cannot make any man but a Christian enjoy the Sabbath, and He cannot make any other enjoy heaven. It was unfit that unbelieving Israel should enter Canaan, but not in itself impossible. In regard to heaven it is both unfit and impossible. There is no rest out of God, out of Christ, and the unbeliever is out of both. I beseech you then, my dear hearers, believe and live. Thus and thus only can you see the heavenly Sabbath. Thus and thus only can you avert the sweep of the awful commination, “ I have sworn in My wrath that they shall not enter into My rest ! ”—*Amen.*

XX

THE REFLEX INFLUENCE OF MISSION- ARY ENTERPRISE ¹

“If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”—ISAIAH lviii. 10, 11.

THE missionary enterprise has many sides. There is the argument for it founded on the obvious necessities of the world, and the adaptation of Christianity which, even without any command, had there been no prohibition, would have warranted missionary effort. There is the argument founded on the direct commission of the Saviour. There is the argument derived from success, an argument which turns the whole history of the Church into a plea for missions. But there is also the argument founded on the Reflex Benefits of the enterprise on the Christian Church itself; and as this argument is often touched on in Scripture, as where it is said, that “the liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that

¹ Preached at Missionary Anniversary, Wallace Green Church, Berwick-on-Tweed, March 1870.

watereth shall be watered himself," and that "he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully," I shall at this time, in humble dependence on Divine grace, direct your minds to it. The words of the text, indeed, are not limited to the gracious effects of spiritual benevolence; for they extend to all temporal help and kindness. And when confined to spiritual benevolence, they apply as much to the ordinary agencies of Christianity at home, as to the missionary enterprises of the Church. Nevertheless, for the sake of distinctness, I shall exclude the reflex influence of temporal benevolence, and shall not dwell on that of home evangelisation; but shall chiefly consider the spiritual benefits reaped in return by those who are actively engaged in helping forward the foreign missions of any Christian Church. Surely to no department of Christian labour are the words more beautifully appropriate, "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

I. I remark, here, *first*, that missionary enterprise *exalts Christian character*. The whole life of the Christian after his conversion is a discipline fitted to purify and exalt his character. If it were not so, he might be translated after his conversion at once to heaven; but as it is, he has to ripen in grace, generally by many labours, sorrows, and chequered experiences. This reconciles us to the wilderness, that here we are not only serving God, but improving ourselves, and preparing through grace for a state of being

where the character here formed shall be perfect and immutable. What, then, are the works and exercises that tend most to build up Christian character to a lofty height, such as we ought all to aspire after and pray to attain? I know nothing equal to work that engages us directly in seeking the conversion of our fellow-men, and especially of those whose conversion seems naturally most difficult, such as we find in the mission field. It is not enough to say this ; I shall endeavour to prove it, and to set before you some tests of elevated character, and to apply them to this subject. We can measure bodily stature and growth ; but we can also measure spiritual greatness and elevation.

(1) The *first* test I set before you, then, is the tendency of this work *to exercise the Christian graces*. Whatever exercises these most, must produce the highest Christian result ; for Christian character is just the Christian graces consolidated and fixed in the soul by cultivation. Take then a grace like *faith*. What can call this out into play like the work of missions from first to last? This is the very objection that worldly men have to it. It is all faith, they say ; mere cloud-land, a going into the chimerical, the quixotic, the impracticable. Nothing so moves the ridicule of such men, as the landing of a missionary on a barbarous island, with nothing but a few Bibles, or perhaps not even that, and a few tools and other appliances of civilisation, to put up some rude buildings for shelter, for instruction, and for worship, in order to act upon savages and cannibals. A poor Cadmus this to bring letters from one hemisphere to another to conjure with ! He might have some chance if he tried to introduce the small-

pox and old-world vices, but to make these monsters leave off their lust and war, their infanticide, and ovens reeking with unnatural feasts, by a few pious phrases, and hymns, and prayers, is an infatuation only to be cured by failure ! But the Church plants its foot exactly here, where the world sees only yielding mist and vapour. Faith "laughs at impossibilities and says it shall be done ;" for its footing is the promise of that God who cannot lie. Must not the missionary be a man of faith, and must not those who support him share it ; so that if faith be the very king of graces, so celebrated in the rolls of the spiritual world, who can stand higher in this nobility, than those who believe and obey, saying, "Here am I, send me !" or, "Here we are, employ our labour, our time, our substance, and give us only souls for our hire !" Again, take *love*. How does this grace, when fully called out, exalt Christian character ! But to my mind, there is no working of love like the sending of the gospel to the perishing souls of men at the ends of the earth. I grant that charity in a true and important sense begins at home. This is our Saviour's own rule, "beginning at Jerusalem ;" and if we had no home Church to draw from, the supplies of charity for the heathen would soon fail. But I confidently ask if home charity—needful and precious as it is, be as lofty a kind of charity, as that which deals with want and woe, enforced by the naked claim of humanity in distress. The man who simply provides for his own, is a very useful member of society ; but he is not taken as the type of a philanthropist, any more than the man who wept not, because the death had happened in another parish, is accepted as a type of sympathetic

sorrow. Our Lord rebuked these limitations in the parable of the good Samaritan ; for there is here the sting of a lofty philanthropy, indignant at any barrier which would circumscribe the outflow of love to the whole human race. Is it not an exalted feature of British commerce that every great calamity strikes to its heart, so that immediately a subscription is opened on every stock-exchange ? But why should missions be less expansive, and the soul be less provided for than the body ? In the light of what we know of the dreadful woes and miseries of the South Seas, of Calabar, of Caffraria, and even of India and China without the gospel, how hard-hearted and even inhuman is the indifference that sends them no relief, and much more that mocks the sender as an enthusiast, or a philanthropist run mad ! O for such madness in our own characters ! It would warm them into a glow, and lift them into a dignity more like heaven than earth ; and men would see that others in comparison were but grovelling earth-worms, who sneered at love like this only because it was for ever a stranger to their own torpid and frost-bitten souls ! I might extend these remarks by dwelling on the tendency of missions to exalt Christian hope and Christian zeal ; but surely enough has been said in regard to this *first* test ; and I claim for missionary work a *first* place, as a training school of the highest Christian graces.

(2) Our *second* test shall be *resemblance to God*. From beginning to end, God takes a missionary attitude. He sends the Son ; He sends the Spirit ; apart even from grace, He sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Who resemble God most in dealing with the distant and degraded heathen ? Is

it those who say, "God has made as many religions as skins. Let us leave every man to his own and trust the great Father to welcome them all." I say this is a libel on God. As much pleased with the old Druid in Mona burning his wicker-basket with its tens of victims, as with the modern Welsh Methodist minister presiding at the Lord's Supper,—as much pleased with a war-dance in Fiji, as with a Sabbath school in action on the same ground! Those so-called Christians have a miserable god, who thus drag him down to sympathy with the lowest barbarism; and as the true God delights in mercy, truth, and righteousness, we claim for the works that foster these in the soul, as the most God-like, the highest stamp of worth and sacredness!

(3) Our *third* test shall be the *example of Jesus Christ*. What was He if not a missionary—the missionary that travelled the farthest, stooped the lowest, gave up the most, suffered the worst? The very world has learned new ideas of greatness and goodness from Jesus Christ; and this central idea of self-sacrificing love, as the very element of moral grandeur, stands out like a new revelation. Deny Christianity as you will, this always comes back; and let infidelity swathe up Christ as a dead body, this glowing heat at the heart burns up the bandages and makes them fall off in rags and ashes. It is heaven's own life; heaven's own fervour come down to men—a hot spring in the moral Iceland of this world! How great then, how ennobling, how soul-exhilarating to feel the kindred flame, not as with the pulse of winter in tree and drooping shrub, but with something of summer warmth and luxuriance, so that the mind and heart of Christ may be seen and radiated

all around ! When Christ gives this, it is His highest boon ; as the sun can do nothing grander than print his own image and make all nature the mirror and storehouse of his beams !

(4) I mention a *fourth* and last test, which is, *our imitation of the greatest Christians*. Can one be mentioned that has not sympathised with the spread and diffusion of the gospel ? It is this which raises the apostles to so sublime a height, and stamps their character as great not only in the sight of men, but of the Lord of Hosts. How poor in comparison the Judaising teachers, that wished to restrict salvation to a nation, or at least impress on it national limitations ! How mean Cæsar, that only conquered a world for himself ! How low the ambition of the great classical authors, that laboured for fame, or for the love of their art, without any love to the souls of men ! When you come down to the Reformers it was the same great passion that inspired them ; and though they did not go into all the world, they were really evangelists, consumed in the ardour of their zeal to restore a lost gospel and bless with it an ever-widening circle of believers. Look at a great spiritual hero like Whitefield or Wesley, the one in deed, the other as truly both in deed and word, taking the motto, "The world is my parish." Look at the great missionaries of recent times. Do they not exalt our common Christianity and make us feel that it is higher than all human aspiration, more tender than all earthly sacrifices ? What a blank in the history of our United Presbyterian Church, if in the last forty years, it had had no missionaries and no missionary martyrs ! These men are a large part of the soul of our Church. They keep it vital ; and little

as by the world they may be esteemed, they do more to keep our great work before us all, than the best preaching or organising talent would do without them. I look on any congregation of our Church that has not visible sympathy with our missionaries, and with others too as far as possible, as in a state little better than death, which it would probably be for the good of Christianity to see broken up, and scattered to the winds altogether. I rejoice that this is not, and has never been, such a congregation ; and I do not look upon any sign of spiritual progress as more sure than a growing activity of enlightened and liberal interest in this glorious enterprise.

II. The *second* way in which missionary enterprise reacts beneficially on the Church is *in increasing Christian joy*. This, of course, would follow from improving Christian character. But I take another line of illustration, and I hope to show that missions remove hindrances to Christian joy, and give also positive occasions for it.

(1) Missions *remove hindrances* to Christian joy. It is a great hindrance to think that the world is still in so backward a state. But the faithful Christian can say, " Well, this is not my fault. I am doing something to remedy it ; and the more that we all do, the sooner will the evil be cured." It is also a great hindrance to Christian joy that the Church is so divided. But here generally in the mission field, matters are at their best. There is more union in the face of the enemy than anywhere over the wide theatre of war ; and many Christian hearts are refreshed by seeing how easily these divisions are overcome there, and by parity of argument, how possible it would be to surmount them at home. I

will only mention another hindrance to joy which missions remove—the sceptical doubts and questionings as to the truth of Christianity. By these, Christians are not overthrown; but they may be shaken and troubled. Now the visible living power of the gospel as seen on the mission field, is not only an evidence of divinity, but meets some current objections and difficulties. Objections are taken to the unity of the human race. But here in point of fact, the race is shown to be one. You have the very same sins and vices, and the very same Christian character brought in to supplant them. There is not a being commonly called a man who has not been found accessible to Christian lessons and influence; and if the creation and fall of all men in Adam were true, as the Bible represents, the facts of man's recovery in Christ could not better agree with that view than they actually do. And this casts indirect light on the question as to the antiquity of man. We do not need to fear or stop the researches of science on that question, any more than on any other. A book that casts more light on the history of the human race than any other—that goes more to the depths of human nature—and that works more stupendous and blessed changes on man in every country and clime, is not likely to be mistaken as to his age, and the conviction, which every day's experience of missions deepens, that the Bible is the God-given book for the race, may help us to wait calmly and hopefully as occasional difficulties arise, till time and study clear them away.

(2) While missions thus remove *hindrances* to Christian joy, they also give *positive occasions* to it. The triumphs of the gospel in these new scenes must

delight every Christian heart. The Christian, as it were, lives over again his own Christian experience in coming to the Saviour and tasting the riches of His grace. He also sympathises with these converts, in having found in such different circumstances the light that makes all things new—the peace that passeth all understanding. He enters into the gladness of the missionary, who after many a hard and sore struggle rejoices that he has not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. He rises even to the joy of angels, as fellow-helpers to conversion, and as assuming the guardianship of unlooked-for heirs of salvation to whom they minister. Nay, the Christian's joy is not complete, till he thinks of his God and Saviour, who for this hour, came to the cross with all its shame and sorrow, and now, in looking back on it all, sees here of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. Well may joy like this satisfy the soul in drought and make the bones fat! Well may it constrain the outburst, "Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!"

III. The *third* and last way, in which I shall show that missionary enterprise reacts beneficially on the Church, is *in enlarging its reward*. I might have dwelt on the impulse to usefulness and success in all other directions, which, with the foregoing enhancements of character and joy, constitute reward in this life. But I point rather here to "the recompense of the reward" hereafter. Our term of labour is bounded. Every year at a time like this, we think of the changes which death has made. Missionaries

and their helpers have bowed to his stroke. Ministers distinguished by their zeal and eloquence, in pleading this great cause ; and other members of the Church by their wisdom, ardour, and liberality in conducting and supporting it, have fallen asleep. Every congregation, like this, misses some faithful friends, whose counsels and gifts and prayers are with us no more. Soon we shall follow ; and the vision shall be sealed up and the prophecy ended. Ought we not then to take home the truth that heaven with its rewards is dependent for its degrees on the efforts of time. “ They rest from their labours and their works do follow them.” These are the true sayings of God. Our works deserve not this reward ; but through grace they secure it. “ The more we toil and suffer here, the sweeter rest will be ; ” and that not only in the first sense of reaction and relief, but to all eternity. The missionary field thus holds out a glorious opportunity of brightening heaven. It will be brightened by the very results of our labours in peopling it with ransomed souls ; but over and above, there are glorious rewards and honours of which we can only speak here like men that dream. Our departed brethren know something of these already—not only the prominent in the great missionary warfare, but the more obscure ; and death shall bring to us the same revelation. O let it not bring to us any regret for deeds undone, prayers unspoken, gifts withholden, crowns lost ; but let our prevailing hope—even amidst every sense of shortcoming and imperfection be, “ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” “ Blessed is that servant whom his lord when

he cometh shall find so doing—of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath!”

Let me, in closing, address a word to those who are not yet interested in Christ, and who therefore cannot rightly join in missionary work, or reap its blessings. Come, my hearers, this day to the world's Saviour, who invites you. If I never at any time before fulfilled Christ's commission—though I trust in my place I have—I fulfil it now, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” This is a part of the world, and you are among the lost creatures whom He calls, and for whom, if you hear, His blood will avail. Come then to this fountain opened—to this Physician prepared—to this everlasting feast spread for you. You have His own word for it, “Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” O that you would come that you might have life, and might be among the many, who shall come from the north and from the south, and from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven!—*Amen.*

XXI

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD ¹

“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”—I TIM. i. 11.

THESE are the words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Some indeed, against the unanimous consent of the early Church, have denied him this and the other so-called Pastoral Epistles. But how strange would it be, that any one should have dared to personate him, as it was a clear case of personation, since the writer makes this most distinct claim in regard to his relation to Timothy and to the apostleship generally. A great responsibility lies on those who disturb these landmarks. They must produce some one able to bend the bow of Ulysses; for there is hardly anything more Pauline than these Epistles. Was it likely that any one else would have said for Paul that he was the “chief of sinners,” or could have written the immortal sentence, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world

¹ Preached on the occasion of the Induction of the Rev. A. R. MacEwen, D.D., to Claremont Church, Glasgow, 15th September 1889.

to save sinners." And is there not something very deep in the saying about the law, that "it is not *made* for a righteous man"?—*i.e.* the law-abiding man has least to do with the law, has it not always in his mind, fighting against it, and fearing its penalty, as the criminal population; but has come round to a practical state of sound doctrine and sound life, such as the gospel was intended to work in the world. Paul, therefore, was on a higher level than those Judaising teachers, who were eternally engaged on the law, and never made anything of it, and hence he claims his prerogative, sinner as he was, to deal with it—"according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust."

As this is an occasion which naturally leads us to speak of the gospel, I have selected this text; and we see at once that it contains two points, *first*, a *recommendation of the gospel*, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," and *next*, a *statement of our own duty in regard to it*, "which was committed to my trust." Of these, in dependence on God's help, let us speak in their order.

I. *First*, then, we have a recommendation of the gospel; and this we see lies again in two things, in its having such an author—it is "the gospel of the *blessed* God"; and secondly in its being in itself of such a nature or character—it is the "*glorious* gospel." Here are two points that lie much across the line of our present thinking, which tends to make little of God and to put the universe in the place of God, and also to make little of the gospel and see in it no glory. But as Christians, we are bound to resist these tendencies, and to exalt the gospel, as having

such an author, and also as being such as it is in its own nature.

§ 1. If then we begin with this *authorship* of the gospel, I shall on this occasion forbear to prove it. I shall take the gospel as the utterance or work of God for granted; and I shall only speak of the exaltation that comes to the gospel by this fact of its birth—its connection with the “blessed” God. This title only occurs once elsewhere in relation to God, and that in the 15th verse of the 6th chapter of this same Epistle, where He is termed the “blessed” and only Potentate.

We stand then, brethren, before this great truth—the greatest of all truths—that there is a God; and we ask what may be suggested by calling Him, the “blessed” God. It is a bright name, full of personality, of power, of wisdom, of holiness, of love. There is personality here; for how can there be blessedness without consciousness, without a unity of self-recognition that gives God all His own, and excludes all those dreary errors, which reflect into God’s own horizon something of our own darkness and ignorance? There is power in God, if He be blessed—all power, uncontrolled power, creative power, to which the blessedness of all other working and possessing is nothing, and which yet is surpassed by God not needing to create, but only to possess, Himself. There is wisdom, including all knowledge, in God, if He be blessed, and if He be working, as He must be, according to a plan; for He knows the end from the beginning and does all things according to the counsel of His own will. I am perpetually astonished at the procedure of those who explore the universe, and yet find in it nothing of the wisdom of

God. It tasks all their mind and goes beyond it. The more a man knows of the universe by science and philosophy, the more mind he is supposed to have. This makes the greatness of the British Association and all kindred bodies ; and yet what their united mind works on and explores, according to some, needed no mind to originate and to uphold. I do not know anything that so writes littleness, mindlessness on all Atheism, and cuts off those who unhappily walk in it from the blessedness of the All-wise God ! Further, if God be blessed, He must be holy, for that distinction which we call moral, must be in God, must have its seat in the breast of God, and the eternally pure and true must be the element of His being. And this necessitates that He shall be kind or loving ; for God is love, and though we may not be able to resolve all moral excellence into benevolence, here is something which squares with all the rest, becomes the moving-principle of all the rest, and opens up a special fountain of blessedness to the Blessed One, in communicating, by creation and otherwise, of His own blessedness to creatures made in His image.

I venture to think then, brethren, that if God be thus "blessed," the Christian religion has a very great and exalted source, has a warmth in the heart of it that does not belong to any other religion, and that if God undertakes to stand to His character, and make us blessed like Himself, we have every reason to embrace it and hold it fast. I am far from saying that we can always see how God supports this character. Sin and sorrow in His universe might seem to interfere with His blessedness as with ours. But though clouds and darkness are "round about

Him " they are not *in* Him ; and the blessedness of power, of wisdom, of purity, and of love will one day break out and make the shadows flee.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may say, that it occurs to me, that the apostle may mean, that God is not only " blessed " outside of the gospel, but that His blessedness re-appears in it. This I think a true idea. In regard indeed to some things in the gospel, they can hardly be said to re-appear, because they do not appear in nature. Thus the Trinity. Some have found this by the light of nature ; but I doubt if nature can be held independently to teach it. But how does the blessedness of God appear in it—a God with plurality, communion, society—whose existence in manifold ways undreamt of, is love ! So also in the very evidences of Christianity the blessedness of God appears, and we may say here—*re-appears*—His power in the miracles, showing that He is not bound down to any mere uniformity of His own laws ; His wisdom in the prophecies, proving that He is working on a great plan of which He can show some part beforehand ; and so with the other evidences, which are not there merely to guarantee God, but also to reveal some part of His " blessed " character. It would be easy to carry this illustration into the substance of Christianity, and to show how all through, the blessedness of God shines out in it.

" 'Twas great to speak the world from nought,
But greater to redeem."

Why should there not be development in God ? May He not have dealings with sinners, such as were not called for in the case of unfallen angels ? And if He has more to communicate, why should

His blessedness not lie in flowing over in a stupendous miracle of grace and filling us with all the fulness of God?

§ 2. This naturally leads me to the *second* recommendation of the gospel, that which lies in its own *nature*. It is "the *glorious* gospel of the blessed God." Now the word gospel has many sides; but its essence is the Redemption of men by Jesus Christ. Let us look at this system in three aspects—its doctrines, its moralities, its ordinances—and I humbly trust that we may see some of its glory.

(1) Look, then, *first*, at the glory of the gospel in its *doctrines*. You may say that you are weary of doctrines; well, then, I shall call them facts, and no one ought to be weary of facts. I shall call them experiences; and no one ought to be indifferent to experiences, especially happy experiences. The facts relate to what theologians call the *impetration* or proving of the gospel; the experiences, to what they call the *application* or the benefits of it.

Now I say there is great glory, untold glory, in the proving or impetrating of the gospel. This brings in the Incarnation and the Atonement of the Saviour of the world. Is there no glory in this great remedy for the world's sin and ruin? Either Christ is sinless or He is not. If a sinner, why is so much made of Him, and how does He so plainly claim to be sinless? And if He must then, to escape this difficulty, be perfect man, is that enough? Have you not got here into the element of miracle, so that you may as well go higher, especially if Scripture constrains you. And where can you stop? Who can be a Mediator, but one who is God as well as man? If Christ be God, you can see how there is a merit in

His obedience, for He comes under law to yield this obedience ; and an unlimited virtue in His blood, for it can cancel any amount of sin. Is not this what the human conscience was driving at, even in the pagan systems ? Is not this that which fulfils the old Jewish law ? Could Christ's poor disciples have invented this, stunned as they were by the great blow of the crucifixion, so as by another shift to have retrieved their Master's honour ? And then could they by all the resources of their enthusiasm have first died for it, and then fastened it on the world ? I refuse a scheme so incredible. I believe there is in the cross of the Son of God an adaptation to the demand of the guilty conscience and penitent heart, which invests it with a transcendent and all-enduring glory. There are more hymns written in the English language within the last half-century on the Atonement than in any former period : " I lay my sins on Jesus," " O Lamb of God, I come," " My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary." And so will it ever be, so long as men see in the maintenance of eternal justice an end worthy of the eternal love, and can explain why the spotless Lamb—dearest of all to the Father—had still to drink the cup and to be " stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." These are the divine facts, with the Scripture explanation of them.

Look now to the human experiences of saving benefit, justification, adoption, sanctification, or as in the order of the Epistle to the Romans, justification in its first five chapters, sanctification in its sixth and seventh, and adoption in its eighth. These all come, through union to the same Saviour, by faith in His name—a faith that is reasonable, resting on

fact, and yet wrought out by the Divine Spirit, so that He at once applies the benefit, and gives the comfort of the change, witnessing in this very work with our spirits that we are the children of God.

These conceptions of the gospel, be it remembered, are not mere conceptions, but practical results. They have been put to the test of experience in all past ages and in all parts of the world, and are ever commending themselves more and more to the hearts and consciences of innumerable multitudes of human beings. The blessedness of God, and of such a God believed in, is more and more conveying itself to His sinful and miserable creatures. We may say with confidence that a religion so commending itself, in spite of pride and self-will and many intellectual difficulties, to the human soul, must satisfy it; and thus the strongest pillar of the Christian religion is God Himself taken up as an object of love and trust into the heart. Some years ago, a leading secularist asked a Christian friend, of what advantage his religion could be to the working classes; and his friend, wisely, I think, dwelling more upon states of mind than on material blessings, answered him, by repeating the answer to the question in the Shorter Catechism, "What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification? The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end." And he went on to say, "If a working man, or you, or I, have assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and per-

severance therein to the end, will it not contribute in a very desirable way to our earthly welfare?" Brethren, here is the test of our religion—Does it give us inward, lasting, growing satisfaction, as felt truth, peace, life with God? Then we can defy all doubt, and if our nature is not a lie, we can trust it for the future, as we have proved it in the past.

(2) A word now on the glory of the gospel in its *morals*. This may be included in what has been said of sanctification; but a statement or two may be added. When, some years ago, a German scholar came out with the idea that the Ten Commandments were too good to have been so early discovered by Moses, it was said that then they were too good to have been discovered still, since the world is still so far behind them. Are they yet the world's chosen law, hung up in our public places, reflected in our favourite organs of opinion, guarding and consecrating our whole social life? Alas, how far is even the Church below them,—in the family, in the market-place, in our ecclesiastical, as well as national relations? But the Church owns them and strives at least to fulfil them, as the law of Christ exalted by His own perfect example. And is not its whole course a struggle with evil, with pride, with lust, with selfishness, with avarice and fraud, so that wherever Christ in His true Kingdom comes, He shakes the empire of darkness and of lies! O my dear brethren, let us be careful how we bear His name, how we hold up His banner, though it rebukes our frequent disloyalty, and how we take to ourselves the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand!

(3) The third and last element of glory that is

to be noticed in the gospel, is in its *ordinances*. Look at the design of these ordinances, which is to bring God and man together in Christ, that they may have transactions with each other in that great society which we call the Christian Church—transactions of homage on their part, of influence on His, and of sympathy in all the members with each other. Look at the praise, look at the prayer, look at the teaching through that great word—the most wonderful and divine of books—God's word, which as applied by His Spirit, founds the society, which continues and extends it, and re-appears in every part of it as its living fruit and echo! What other society is like this in the world? The other religions so called have not enough of truth, and philosophy, if it have the truth, has not enough of sympathy; whereas the Christian Church exists only to make men like God, wise, and holy, and blessed. It takes babes to its embrace, longing for a second and better birth, and watching over them with loving discipline. It makes the sons of the stranger also to come bending to it, and when other societies perish, rises with its Lord to a better resurrection!

Its very memories, like the Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper, are pledges and prophecies of better things to come, and its fellowship is bound to the throne of God. Blessed society! who would not be a member and an office-bearer in it though all unworthy? Who would not obtain in it by faith a good report, and then that better thing which makes all perfect?

II. It only remains, that having seen the recommendation of the gospel, in its connection with God, and in its own nature, we should look for a moment, at

our duty towards it. It was, says Paul, "committed to my trust." He was a steward, and "a good steward of the *manifold* grace of God." How manifold has that grace been in, and with him. He is still, after eighteen hundred years, a front actor in the scene of human things. His words are carried by those who will be themselves immortal into the darkest places of the world's sin and misery! They are re-echoed by hundreds of voices in Divinity Halls, and by ten thousands in Christian pulpits. They reproduce the same war between the law in the members and the law in the mind — the same crucifixion with Christ, the same "groanings which cannot be uttered." Nor can we suppose that Paul speaks here only as a minister and an apostle. His whole dealings with all Christians go on the principle, "Freely ye have received, freely give." "What hast thou which thou hast not received." "So then every one of us shall give account of himself unto God."

How then, dear brethren, shall we who are Christians meet this common duty of stewardship? Is there not, first, in regard to the gospel, the duty of *preservation*? Is he a steward, who suffers the property to be wasted and dilapidated, with which he is entrusted? For such a steward, there is the judgment of man, and can we be guiltless, if we see the gospel denied and do not assert it, misrepresented and do not clear it, mutilated and do not stand by its integrity? Let us remember Paul's own words here, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, *I have kept the faith.*" Another part of our stewardship is that of *transmission*. We are heirs of all the Christian centuries, and specially of the memories of our own land and our own branch of

Christ's Church. We are to do what we can to bring more truth out of God's word, but we shall never succeed if we break our succession with the past, and do not hand on its treasures to the future. How great are our obligations to the rising generation in times like these, when the work of the Sabbath School and Bible Class is becoming increasingly difficult, and parental care and influence are, I fear, speaking largely, hardly asserting their pre-eminence in Christian training. Would to God that all the agencies that have to work together here, remembered their stewardship, and not only their duties but their hopes! Why should congregations that have been honoured in doing God's work not expect the succession to be continued in their children? Why should it be as a thing looked for, and not a thing dark and unnatural, that any Christian family should lapse and degenerate? Rather let us send on the gospel with the best credentials of our own fidelity; and let the father to the children make known the truth! One other and last part of our stewardship is that of *diffusion*. "I am a debtor," says the apostle, "both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." On how many a stormy sea, in how many an inhospitable desert, in how many a dreary dungeon did the apostle make good his words! Yet none of these things moved him, nor death itself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Did he do more than his duty, or do we do less? Happily Christianity is again upon the march, and our sympathies are again with the dear old banner, as it goes into the thickest of the fight, giving deliverance

on earth and joy in heaven ! Let our Church, which has done nothing better, if anything so good, in recent years, awake to her great capacities and opportunities in this field which is the world. The commerce of this great city will never look so beneficent as when associated with this enterprise. Why should we grudge our best to those who need it most, and to whom it must come, if at all, not on the principle of supply and demand, but without money and without price. Let our whole Church at the Saviour's call be aroused everywhere to new energies and new hopes ! And may this congregation inaugurate a new ministry by coming more visibly than ever before "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty."

My dear friends, my words in connection with the special circumstances of this day shall be few ; you do not need to be assured of my sincere interest in your welfare ; nor does my dear friend, who has found himself, at the sacrifice of ties justly dear to him, brought in the Providence of God to this place. It is my most earnest prayer that God may set before him here, a long, an active, and a fruitful ministry. The occasion revives all the memories of his sainted father, who lives in every thought of this day. May the son, as he has already shown, have the same heartfelt love to the ancient gospel, with the same readiness to welcome every fruit of study and sacred learning that may add to its clearness, and bring out its adaptation to the souls of men. May he have the same deep sympathy with men of every class, and the same practical conviction that only in the name of Christ is the one all-embracing blessing found for

all. May he have the same fearlessness and courage in speaking his mind and following, as he sees it, the path of duty. May he have the same spirit of judgment which raised his father to be one of the wisest counsellors our Church has ever had, and the same "mind to work" which made him one of her best helpers, and along with all the special gifts and training and experience, which may be said to be his own, may he have the same spirit of prayer and humble dependence, without which there is nothing strong in Christ's spiritual kingdom. Very specially do I this day commend you and him in this new relation to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified! "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength." "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."—*Amen.*

THE END

Works by Rev. Professor MARCUS DODS, D.D.

The Book of Genesis. By Rev. Professor MARCUS DODS, D.D. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d.

"Every reader of cultured mind and delicate instinct will recognise with delight and admire those fine qualities of sympathetic insight, sensitive perception, ethical intuition, and religious tact, which have made it possible for the writer to so profoundly grasp and vividly reproduce the spiritual life and moral aspiration of ancient and alien ages."—*The late Professor W. G. Elmslie.*

The Gospel of St. John. In Two Volumes. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d. each.

"An excellent contribution to the series. Dr. Dods appears to us always to write with clearness and with vigour. He has the gift of lucidity of expression, and by means of apt illustrations he avoids the cardinal sin of dryness, so that the interest, even of the general reader, will not flag as he smoothly glides through these chapters."—*Guardian.*

First Epistle to the Corinthians. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d.

"Marked by the author's well-known characteristics of rich Scriptural learning, catholicity of tone, and deep spiritual insight."—*Academy.*

An Introduction to the New Testament. Seventh Thousand. Fcap. 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.

"The work is of brief compass, and covers a vast field of study, but the necessary compression has been done with the skill of one experienced in the needs of students. It is valuable for what itself teaches; but more so, perhaps, for the fulness with which it indicates at every step the many various lines of literature that a student may follow up towards fuller knowledge."—*Scotsman.*

Mohammed, Buddha, and Christ. Sixth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

The Parables of our Lord. FIRST SERIES. The Parables recorded by St. Matthew. Seventh Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

The Parables of our Lord. SECOND SERIES. The Parables recorded by St. Luke. Sixth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Sixth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

The Prayer that Teaches to Pray. Seventh Edition. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d.

Israel's Iron Age. Sketches from the Period of the Judges. Sixth Edition. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

Works by Dr. R. W. DALE, of Birmingham.

Fellowship with Christ, and other Discourses delivered on Special Occasions. Third Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

"These are certainly among the most massive, and, as a consequence, most impressive sermons of the day. Each is a sort of miniature theological treatise, but the theology is alive—as it were, heated through and through by the fires of a mighty conviction which has become a passion to convince."—*Speaker*.

The Living Christ and the Four Gospels. Sixth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

"As a man of culture and eloquence he has put the case strongly and well, and it will not be surprising if his book—which is not written, he tells us, for Masters of Arts, but in the first instance for members of his own congregation, and then for all ordinary people who take an interest in such matters—should be the means of convincing many that the assumptions sometimes made about late origin of the Gospels, etc., are utterly unfounded."—*Scotsman*.

Laws of Christ for Common Life. Fifth Thousand. Crown 8vo, 6s.

"Sound sense and wholesome Christian teaching conveyed in pure, idiomatic, and forcible English."—*Scotsman*.

The Epistle to the Ephesians. Its Doctrines and Ethics. Sixth Edition. Crown 8vo, 7s. 6d.

"The terse and vigorous style, rising on occasion into a manly and impressive eloquence, of which Mr. Dale is known to be a master, gives lucid expression to thought that is precise, courageous, and original."—*Spectator*.

The Ten Commandments. Sixth Edition. Crown 8vo, 5s.

"Full of thought and vigour."—*Spectator*.

Week-Day Sermons. Fifth Edition. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

"Dr. Dale is certainly an admirable teacher of Christian ethics. He is, perhaps, the greatest living successor of the Apostle James. In this volume he appears at his best."—*Christian*.

The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church. A Series of Discourses on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Eighth Edition. Crown 8vo, 6s.

"Wholesome sermons than these it is almost impossible to conceive. Mr. Dale's preaching has always been remarkable for moral energy and fervour, but here this characteristic rises to its highest power."—*Expositor*.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

PROF. GODET'S BIBLICAL STUDIES.

I.

Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d.

STUDIES ON THE EPISTLES.

By F. GODET, D.D., Professor of Theology, Neuchatel.

Translated by MRS. ANNIE HARWOOD HOLMDEN.

"There is no other book in which the results of modern criticism are so conveniently accessible and so admirably sifted."—*Expositor*.

"It maintains the level of careful scholarship, critical sagacity, and practical piety on which all the writer's work stands. The mature and careful expression of his views on matters of such central importance, by one of the most highly and justly respected of living orthodox exegetes, will have great value for the theological student."—*Glasgow Herald*.

II.

Eighth Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d.

STUDIES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Edited by the HON. and REV. W. H. LYTTTELTON, M.A.,
Canon of Gloucester.

CONTENTS.—The Origin of the Four Gospels—Jesus Christ—The Work of Christ—The Four Chief Apostles—The Apocalypse.

"When he ascends into the higher regions of theology, as in the studies on the person and work of Jesus Christ, his insight is always profound, and his teaching weighty and suggestive."—*Spectator*.

III.

Fifth Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d.

STUDIES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Edited by the HON. and REV. W. H. LYTTTELTON, M.A.

CONTENTS.—Angels—The Plan of the Development of Life on our Earth—The Six Days of Creation—The Four Greater Prophets—The Book of Job—The Song of Songs.

"Unquestionably M. Godet is one of the first, if not the very first, of contemporary commentators. We have no hesitation in advising all students of the Scripture to procure and to read with careful attention these luminous essays."—*Literary Churchman*.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

WORKS by DR. FAIRBAIRN.

Studies in the Life of Christ. By Rev. A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D., Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford. Fifth Edition. 9s.

"Professor Fairbairn's thoughtful and brilliant sketches."—*Expositor*.

The City of God. A Series of Discussions in Religion. Third Edition. 7s. 6d.

CONTENTS.—Faith and Modern Thought—Theism and Science—Man and Religion—God and Israel—The Problem of Job—Man and God—The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith—Christ in History—The Riches of Christ's Poverty—The Quest of the Chief Good—Love of Christ—The City of God.

WORKS by REV. DR. JAMES STALKER.

The Preacher and his Models. The Yale Lectures on Preaching, 1891. By Rev. JAMES STALKER, D.D., Author of "The Life of Jesus Christ," "The Life of St. Paul," etc. Sixth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s.

Imago Christi: The Example of Jesus Christ. Twentieth Thousand. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s.

PRESENTATION EDITION. Handsomely bound in padded leather. Red under gold and red lines. 7s. 6d. net. May also be had in calf and Turkey morocco.

"The execution is full of ingenuity, and the book can be recommended as a devout and thoughtful commentary on practical Christian life in many phases. Mr. Stalker has broad sympathies and a watchful eye, and speaks in a tone that will commend itself to all his readers."—*Saturday Review*.

The Four Men. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. [*Nearly ready.*]

CONTENTS.—THE FOUR MEN: (1) The Man the World sees; (2) The Man seen by the Person who knows him Best; (3) The Man seen by Himself; (4) The Man whom God sees—Temptation, Conscience, Culture—Youth and Age—Public Spirit—Christ and Humanity—The Christianity for To-Day.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE.

Edited by REV. W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, M.A., LL.D.

Price 7s. 6d. each Volume.

Genesis. By Rev. Prof. MARCUS DODS, D.D.

Exodus. By Very Rev. G. A. CHADWICK, D.D., Dean of Armagh.

Leviticus. By Rev. S. H. KELLOGG, D.D.

Judges and Ruth. By Rev. R. A. WATSON, D.D.

Samuel I. By Rev. Prof. W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

Samuel II. By the same Author.

The Book of Job. By Rev. R. A. WATSON, D.D.,
Author of "Gospels of Yesterday," etc.

The Psalms. Vol. I. By Rev. ALEXANDER MAC-
LAREN, D.D.

Proverbs. By Rev. R. F. HORTON, M.A.

Ecclesiastes. With a New Translation. By Rev. SAMUEL
COX, D.D.

Isaiah. By Rev. Prof. GEORGE ADAM SMITH, M.A. In
Two Volumes.

The Prophecies of Jeremiah. With a Sketch of his
Life and Times. By Rev. C. J. BALL, M.A., Chaplain
of Lincoln's Inn.

St. Matthew. By Rev. J. MONRO GIBSON, D.D., Author
of "The Ages before Moses," etc.

Mark. By Very Rev. G. A. CHADWICK, D.D., Dean of
Armagh.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

The Expositor's Bible.—*Continued.*

St. Luke. By Rev. HENRY BURTON, M.A.

The Gospel of St. John. By Rev. Prof. MARCUS DODS,
D.D. In Two Volumes.

The Acts of the Apostles. By Rev. Prof. G. T.
STOKES, D.D.

1st Corinthians. By Rev. Prof. MARCUS DODS, D.D.

Galatians. By Rev. Prof. G. G. FINDLAY, B.A., Heading-
ley College, Leeds.

The Epistle to the Ephesians. By Rev. Prof. G. G.
FINDLAY, B.A.

Colossians and Philemon. By Rev. ALEXANDER
MACLAREN, D.D.

The Epistles to the Thessalonians. By Rev. JAMES
DENNEY, B.D.

The Pastoral Epistles. By Rev. ALFRED PLUMMER,
D.D., Master of University College, Durham.

Hebrews. By Rev. Principal T. C. EDWARDS, D.D.,
Author of "A Commentary on the First Epistle to the
Corinthians."

St. James and St. Jude. By Rev. A. PLUMMER, D.D.,
Master of University College, Durham.

The Epistles of St. John. By Right Rev. W. ALEX-
ANDER, D.D., Lord Bishop of Derry and Raphoe.

The Book of Revelation. By Rev. Prof. W. MILLIGAN,
D.D.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27 PATERNOSTER ROW.

DATE DUE

--	--	--

THE KING'S LIBRARY



3000127474

